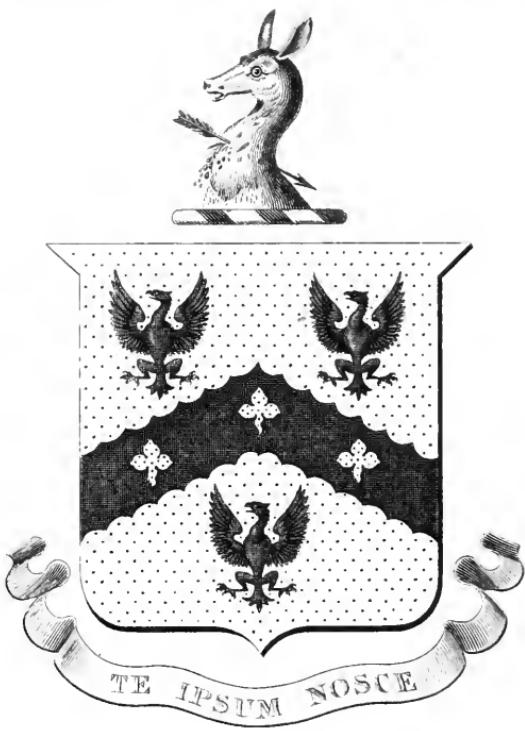




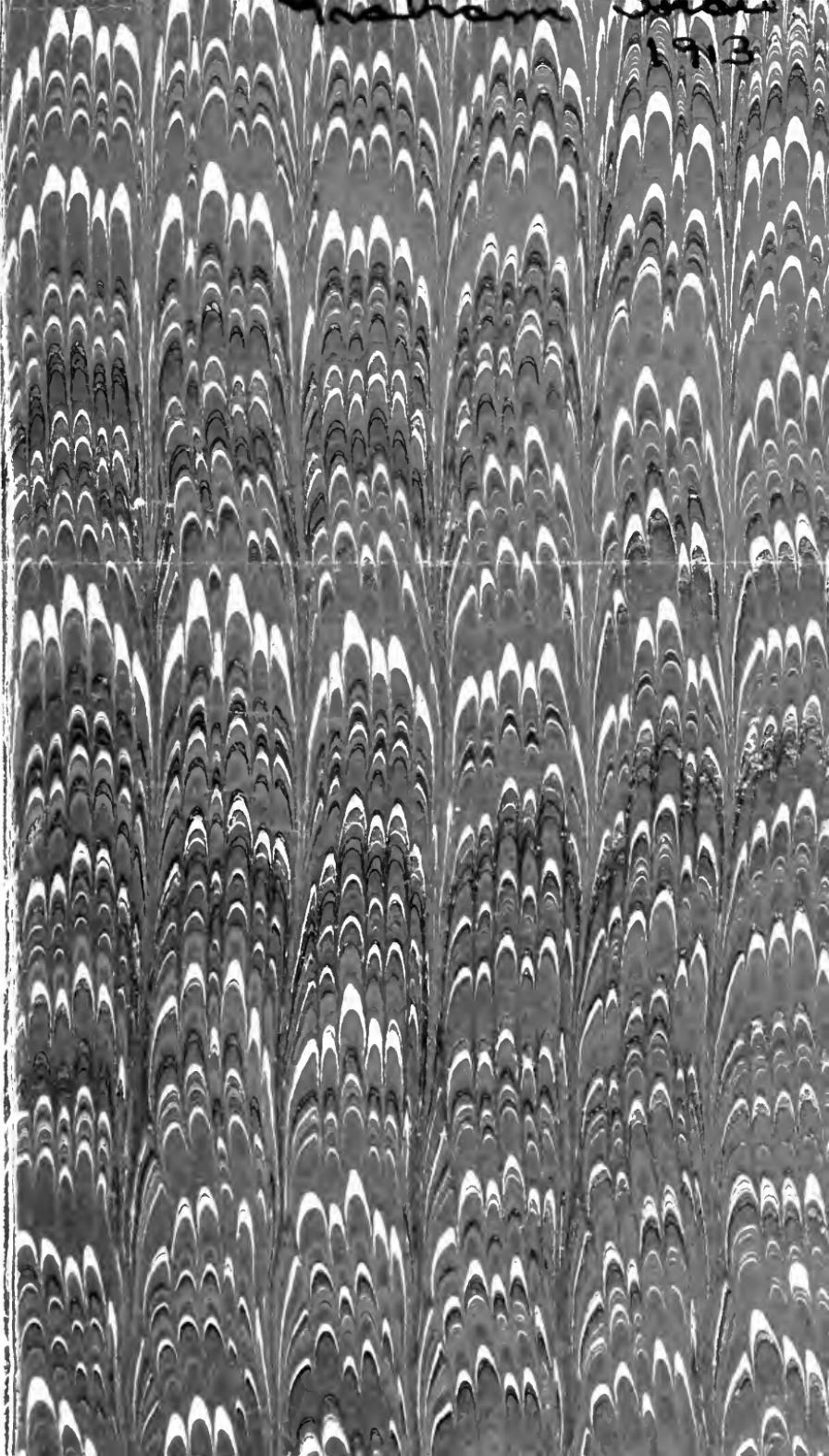
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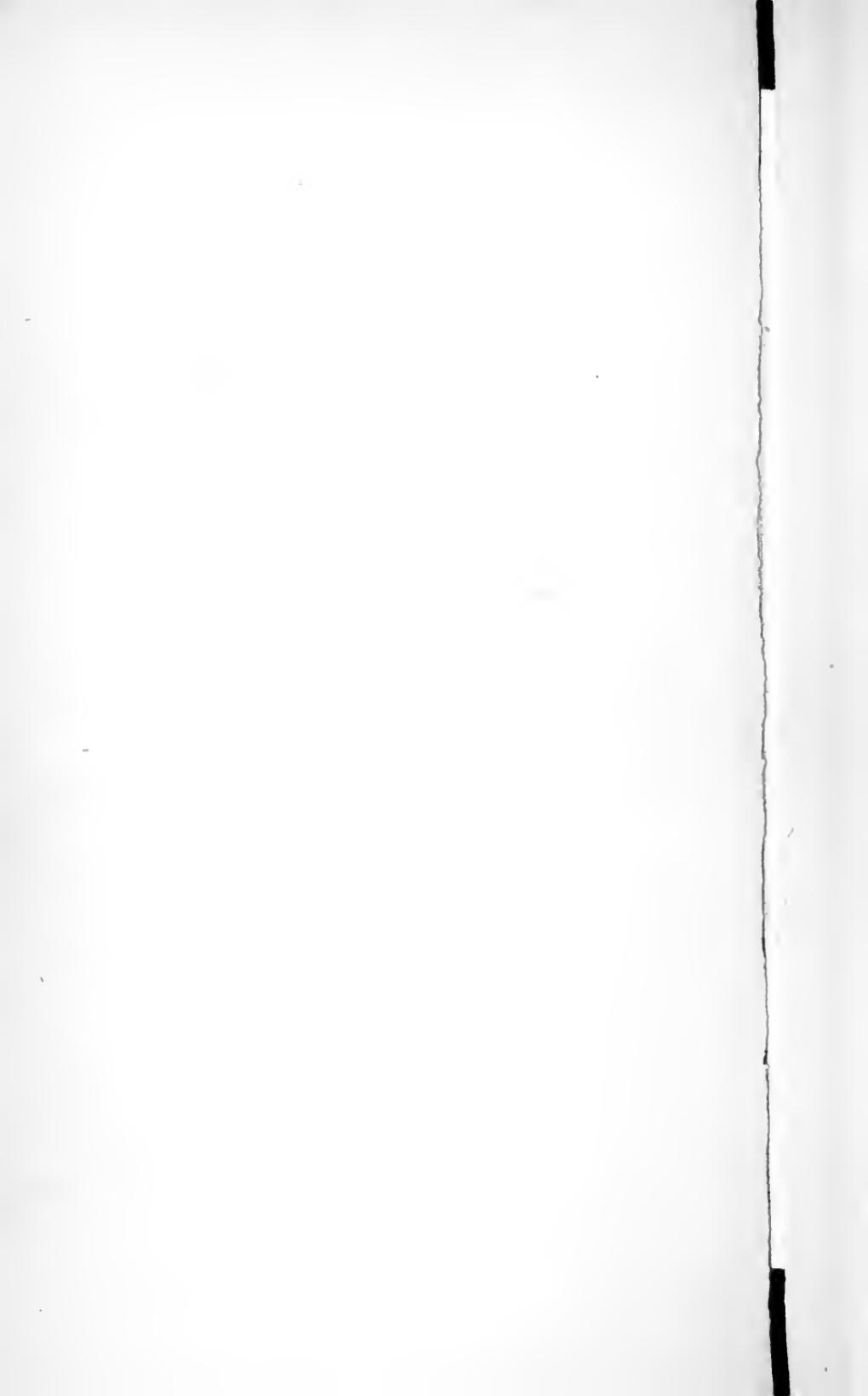


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C A L D E R O N

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N O T E.

THE grateful acknowledgments of the writer are offered to his Grace the Archbishop of Dublin, to Mr D. F. MacCarthy, and to Mr Fitzgerald, for their kind permission to make use of their versions from Calderon. Quotations from them are distinguished respectively by (D.) (M.) and (F.) Those from Shelley are marked (S.) For the other versions the writer is responsible. All the verse translations from Calderon in this book are in the metres of the original, with the exception of those taken from Shelley. Here and there prose renderings have been given; but the reader must bear in mind that Calderon never employs prose himself.

Great obligations have been incurred, in this little book, to the Archbishop of Dublin, whose admirable ‘Essay on Calderon’ is most valuable to the English student; and also to Mr D. F. MacCarthy, to whose interesting researches the writer owes much information.

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C A L D E R O N.

INTRODUCTION.

GREECE after the Persian war, England and Spain after the discovery of the New World and the introduction of the new learning, produced, each of them, that rare thing—a great and truly national drama. But while the three mighty tragedians of Greece, and the English dramatist, whose splendour has eclipsed to our eyes many brilliant lights among his contemporaries, are something more than mere names to every person of even moderate culture in Europe and America, it is not so with the glories of the Spanish stage. The two men, who, by the consent of all Spaniards, occupy the two peaks of their Parnassus, Lope de Vega and Calderon, have paid for the enthusiastic admiration of their countrymen by the indifference of foreigners. And the vast number of inferior but still good dramatists who wrote the thirty thousand plays computed to have been produced between 1590, when Lope de Vega began his career at Madrid, and 1681, when Calderon died there,

seem, all but wholly, unknown outside Spain. Yet among them we find such names as Guillen de Castro, whose "Cid" was the model of Corneille's; Montalvan, author of the pathetic "Lovers of Teruel;" Guevara, who painted Castilian loyalty so well in the person of Guzman, in his "King before Kin;" and Tirso de Molina, whose "Deceiver of Seville" Molière was glad to copy in his "Don Juan."

The very abundance of their riches may have impeded the progress of the Spanish play-writers down the crowded thoroughfares that lead to posthumous renown. Lope de Vega's dramatic works of different descriptions were estimated at twelve hundred, of which about five hundred survive. Of Sophocles, the most perfect tragedian of Athens, but seven plays are left to us. It is easy to see how superior is the lighter-freighted bark's chance of reaching the distant, and desired, haven of appreciation in remote centuries and countries. Then, too, the intense nationality of the Spanish stage—the very quality which enabled it to flourish in the land of the Inquisition, despite the (at times) resolute opposition of the Church—has proved a barrier to the reception of its great writers abroad. Its strong individuality, which imposed its own forms on the court entertainments, instead of taking its tone from them, has displeased men bred to other ways and other thoughts. Ticknor justly remarks that "the Spaniards have always been a poetical people. A deep enthusiasm runs, like a vein of pure ore, at the bottom of their character, and the workings of strong passions and an original imagination are everywhere visible among the wild elements that break out on its surface." It is obvious, then, that this character must

be difficult of comprehension to nations more devoted to the material and the utilitarian; and that to them its results may appear fantastic. For, as the historian of Spanish literature goes on to say, “the energy, the fancy, which, earlier, produced the beautiful ballads of Spain, the force of national character which drove the Moors from Toledo, Seville, and Granada, called forth, directed, and controlled, in the seventeenth century, a dramatic literature, which grew out of the national genius and the condition of the mass of the people. . . . The Spanish drama, in its highest and most heroic forms, was still a popular entertainment. Its purpose was not only to please all classes, but to please all equally. Whether the story the mass of people saw enacted were probable or not, was to them a matter of small consequence. But it was necessary that it should be interesting. Above all, it was necessary that it should be Spanish; and therefore, though its subject might be Greek or Roman, oriental or mythological, the characters represented were always Castilian, and Castilian after the fashion of the seventeenth century, governed by Castilian notions of gallantry and the Castilian point of honour.” Not therefore without an effort, can a reader of alien clime place himself at the right point of view from which to enjoy what so enraptured the people of Madrid two centuries ago. A theatre that did not model itself on the antique, which was uninfluenced by Lope de Vega’s contemporary, Shakespeare, and which was founded on the strongly-marked peculiarities of a national character very unlike our own, may fail to attract at first sight; however curiosity may be stimulated by the promise of a drama which, “in many of its attributes and character-

istics, stands by itself ;" and by the assurance of its gifted historian that, in studying it, we are studying "one of the most striking and one of the most interesting portions of modern literature." To the scantily recorded life, but voluminous works, of the most illustrious ornament of that drama, it is, nevertheless, the aim of the following little work to introduce the reader.

CHAPTER I.

HIS LIFE.

PEDRO CALDERON DE LA BARCA, the greatest of the many great dramatists of Spain, was born at Madrid on January 17, 1600. While he lay in his cradle Spain was the most powerful state in Europe ; before his long life ended it was the weakest and most despised. His parents were both of noble family. His father was secretary to the treasury under two kings. It is said of both parents that they were "very Christian and discreet persons, who gave their children an education conformable to their illustrious lineage." Of these children (four in number), Calderon was the youngest. His only sister, Dorothea, became a nun at Toledo, and survived her brother one year. Of his two brothers, one died early, stabbed by an actor with whom he had had a quarrel ; and Calderon seems to have lost the other when himself forty-five years of age. Sent to school at nine years old, and afterwards to the University of Salamanca, the young Pedro distinguished himself at both ; leaving the latter at the age of nineteen, having amassed (says his biographer) "large stores of knowledge in geography, chronology, and history, alike sacred and

profane." Five or six years before this he had written his first play (now lost), "The Heavenly Chariot;" and there are reasons for ascribing his "Devotion of the Cross" to the time which followed close on his departure from Salamanca. His first published sonnet was in praise of St Isidore of Madrid. It appeared in 1620 among several other verses in his honour, and was praised by Lope de Vega; who, two years later, assigned the third prize to Calderon for a longer poem on the same subject. In 1622, if not sooner, a play by Calderon was acted at Madrid. This first had many successors. Some appeared in their author's absence; for the profession of arms which he had embraced kept him in the Milanese, or in Flanders, most of the years between 1625 and 1635. In the latter year, Philip the Fourth (himself a dramatic author) recalled Calderon to Spain, where he took at once the place in the public regard which the death of Lope de Vega left vacant for him. Made a knight of Santiago, and high in the king's favour, Calderon insisted on taking his part in the war of Catalonia in 1640; and is said to have quickly finished off a piece bespoken from him by the king, with the amiable design of keeping his favoured poet out of danger. The next year we hear of him as again at Madrid on a mission from the Count Duke Olivarez to his royal master; who also recalled him there once at least before the final suppression of the Catalonian revolt, to arrange the pageants which were to welcome his second wife, Maria Anna of Austria, to his capital in 1649.

Calderon seems never to have married. A few love verses of his have been unearthed by the diligence of

his biographers; but to whom they were addressed is unknown to us. In 1651 he did as his great predecessor had done—he took holy orders. Preferments, chaplaincies, honorary and otherwise, were bestowed on him by his ever-constant patron; to please whom he consented (a consent not disapproved by the Spanish prelates) to resume the dramatic labours which he had intended to relinquish at his ordination,—devoting them thenceforth exclusively to the royal festivities, and to the sacred rejoicings of the Corpus Christi festival. Philip the Fourth died in 1665. Calderon survived his patron sixteen years. To his earlier lyrics and longer poems on the Deluge, in defence of the nobility of painting and of the drama, he seems now to have added his, as yet, undiscovered poem, in octaves, on the “Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Hell, and Heaven.” His last secular play, “Leonidas and Marphisa,” was written in his eighty-first year, as was, at the earliest, his *auto* entitled “The Divine Philothea.” On the Whitsunday of 1681 Calderon, already mortally ill, roused himself, after receiving the last Sacraments, to endeavour to complete an *auto* for the coming festival at Madrid, as he had done for thirty-seven years past. But the hand of death was upon him. He had to leave the task to another, and (in the words of his friend De Solis) “he died, as they say the swan does, singing.” All Spain mourned for him. The weak King Charles the Second shed tears. Three thousand torches blazed at his funeral. Poems in his honour were composed at Rome, Milan, Naples, and Lisbon, as well as at Madrid. A fine monument, which has long since disappeared, was erected to his memory in the church of San Salvador.

In 1840, the church itself being in ruins, the great poet's dust was transported to that of Atocha ; and its third, and, it may be hoped, final translation took place in 1869, when, with much pomp and ceremony, it was borne to the new national Pantheon,—the church of what was the Convent of St Francis.

Vera Tassis, Calderon's contemporary biographer, gives him this character : “ His house was the universal shelter of the needy ; his society was alike the safest and most profitable, his tongue the most candid and honourable, and his pen the most courteous of his century—for it wounded no man's fame by biting observations, nor ever stained the credit even of those who spoke evil of its wielder, any more than his ear ever gave heed to the malicious detraction of envy against others.” No wonder that a man who united such an amiable disposition to an unrivalled genius, was the chosen and honoured friend of the greatest nobles of Spain, as well as the loved and respected servant of its sovereign. But the panegyrics, from which we derive this general information, condescend unfortunately to no detailed description of Calderon's life. We catch indeed a glimpse of him talking to a lively Frenchman on the rules of the drama, and allowing the admirer of Racine to go away with the notion that the great Castilian's “ head-piece was but poorly furnished.” We are told how he used to collect his friends around him on his birthdays, and tell them stories of his earlier life in camp and field ; but, alas ! there was no Boswell present to record them for us.

Having exhausted our other scanty stores of information, we turn to Calderon's portrait and to his epitaph. The first is grave and dignified,—the Cross of Santiago

on the breast, as befits the descendant of the early Christian champions, who came down from the mountains above Burgos to drive the Moors from their usurped country—the steadfast wielder of the pen (as his fathers of the sword) against the foes of the faith. The brow is lofty and capacious, like Shakespeare's; the large eyes, set wide apart under their finely-pencilled eyebrows, have a tender and thoughtful expression; the nose is well shaped and slightly aquiline, and the lips are well curved and rather full—again like Shakespeare's: only the look of keen penetration and strong latent humour in the Englishman's countenance is wanting in the Spaniard's more refined, and dreamier, face. The epitaph assures us that Calderon in his dying moments felt small esteem for his most admired secular plays—"Quæ summo plausu vivens scripsit, moriens praescribendo despexit." That something like this had been his judgment all along is confirmed by the fact that while he carefully published one volume of his sacred *autos* in his own lifetime, he, like Shakespeare, left his other dramas to their fate, only rousing himself sometimes to complain of the inaccuracy with which they were printed by others; so that, had not Columbus's descendant, the Duke of Veragnas, obtained a list of his plays from the poet, the troubles of his editors in ascertaining them correctly would have been endless.

As it is, one hundred and eighteen extant plays (including a few written in partnership with friends) are ascribed on good grounds to Calderon, while eight or ten await discovery. Of the hundred *autos* ascribed to him by Vera Tassis, we possess seventy-two.

It is evident, therefore, that Calderon did not work

with Lope de Vega's reckless haste. Though his life was the longer of the two, his numerous writings look few compared with those of that prodigal genius. Yet his drama embraces a wider range of subjects. His predecessor's great invention, the "cloak and sword" drama, flourished in his hands—its name derived from the national dress of the period, its personages from the upper ranks of Spanish society; its subject the dangers of courtship, while a father or brother is always on guard, weapon in hand, over the beauty whose dark eyes flash so bewitchingly from behind her grated window in the house or her mantilla in the street. De Vega's plays of "Common Life" are imitated, and surpassed, by Calderon in his "*Alcalde de Zalamea*"; while his "*Heroic Drama*" is continued by his great successor through the most varied epochs and the most distant countries, assuming its grandest proportions when it celebrates the heroism of Christian martyrs. Nor is this all. Mythologic legend, tales of early and late romance, all interesting stories wheresoever found, are dramatised by Calderon; while tragedy ever and anon steps in black-veiled and awful, to "ope the sacred source of sympathetic tears," or—at times—to freeze it by the chilling force of a horror beyond words.

Like Lope de Vega (though less than he), Calderon was apt to sacrifice his characters to his plot. The latter is in all his plays contrived and developed with the most admirable skill—a skill which made Schiller exclaim, "This poet would have saved Goethe and myself from many mistakes, if we had learned to know him earlier." The former often interest us more by what they do than by what they are; present to us an idealised portraiture

of national, rather than of individual, character ; and—especially in the “cloak and sword” plays—bear a strong family likeness to one another. Goethe—much as he admired Calderon—once compared his dramas to leaden bullets all cast in the same mould ; and (referring principally to the class of dramas above-mentioned, with their hero and heroine all love, honour, and jealousy, and their father or brother ever ready to strike if the gallant of the piece has even been seen in the house of his beloved) gave his opinion of him thus : “Calderon, splendid as he is, has so much of the conventional about him, that it is hard for an ordinary observer to get a sight of the poet’s great talent through all his theatrical etiquette.” There are doubtless exceptions to this in Calderon’s plays ; and I hope in the succeeding chapters to introduce the reader to more than one individual and strongly-marked character. But for the most part it is not so : Don Diego is very like Don Juan ; Ines and Isabel closely resemble each other ; and the best and most distinct of Calderon’s creations do not grow and develop fresh traits of character under the pressure of outward circumstances as Shakespeare’s do,—far less add, like them, vast stores to their careful observer’s knowledge of human nature, or perplex him (as they too do at times) by the labyrinthine mental recesses which they unveil to his gaze.

Calderon’s plays (unlike Shakespeare’s) tolerate no admixture of prose. The buffoon (*a sine qua non* on the Spanish stage, and usually the hero’s servant) expresses himself in the same verse, rhymed or not, as the master whose adventures he often parodies. But there is no wearying sameness in the verse employed. Cal-

deron's main reliance, like Lope de Vega's, was on the old ballad measure of his country, in which sometimes one vowel (oftener two) forms the rhyme, regardless of the differing consonants, for hundreds of lines. But, like de Vega, Calderon knew how to vary this *assonant* verse with other measures both Spanish and Italian—specimens of many of which will occur further on. The national *redondilla*, or verse with rhymes of the first and fourth and second and third lines, and the *quintilla*, which adds a fifth line, rhyming once more with the third, carry much of the dialogue: while in the more impassioned parts, other charming lyric measures alternate with the stately octave verse, or *terza rima* of Italy; not even Petrarch's sonnet failing to find due place. And Calderon knew how to employ each of these styles of verse with a master's hand. Their rich harmonies are an unfailing delight to the hearer.

Thus lifted by its external structure into a purely poetic region, the drama of Calderon vindicates its right to dwell there by its poetic conception of life, its high-wrought passion, and its gorgeous imagery. The spectator is wafted by its influence to a fairer country than that in which his common hours are passed—where the turf is greener, the flowers more brilliant, and the sky bluer than is their wont, and “where the scenery is lighted up with unknown and preternatural splendour. When Calderon succeeds, his success is of no common character. He sets before us models of ideal beauty,—a world into which nothing enters but the highest elements of his nation's genius. There the fervid yet grave enthusiasm of the old Castilian heroism, the chivalrous adventures of modern courtly honour, the generous self-

devotion of individual loyalty, and that reserved but passionate love which, in a state of society where it was so rigorously withdrawn from notice, became a kind of religion of the heart,—all seem to find their appropriate home. His idealised drama, resting, as it does, on the purest and noblest elements of the Spanish national character, with all its unquestionable defects, is to be placed among the extraordinary phenomena of modern poetry.”¹

In short, in Calderon’s best plays we see the Spanish drama in its utmost exuberance of life, and can fully enjoy what no mean judge² has called “its inimitable beauty; the freshness of its inventions, the charm of its style, the flowing naturalness of its dialogue, the marvellous ingenuity of its plots, the ease with which everything is at last adjusted and explained;—the brilliant interest, the humour, the wit, that marks every step as we advance.”

¹ Ticknor: Hist. of Spanish Literature, B. xxiv.

² Jovellanos.

CHAPTER II.

HIS HISTORIC DRAMA.

THE description which we have quoted from Ticknor of the Spanish drama will prepare the reader to find Calderon take many liberties with his historical subjects; whose heroes and heroines he had to transmute into Castilians in order to enable them to win the sympathies of his audience. The illustrious foreigners to whom he accords the honour of this naturalisation belong to many epochs of history, both sacred and profane; and to many different countries, beginning with Semiramis and ending with persons who, like the poet himself, were present at the siege of Breda. The history, learned at Salamanca, as well as the geography, are, when convenient to the poet, laid aside as he pursues his heroes' stirring adventures,—for he well knew that no spectator would rebuke him for placing Athens in Asia, or turning the Peloponnesus into an adjacent mountain, while his thoughts were engrossed by the love of Apelles and the generosity of Alexander. Coriolanus, Scipio, and Judas Maccabæus may amaze us, travestied as romantic lovers. To Calderon's audience nothing could seem more natural or more becoming; and it is to be feared that a play like

Shakespeare's "Julius Cæsar," in which no one makes love or is made love to, would have wholly failed to please them. Hence it comes that, while the great English and the great Spanish dramatist resemble each other so closely in the bold licences by which they startle the historical pedant, their aims in the plays they have drawn from history are so diverse as to preclude comparisons between them. Singularly enough, they have each written a "Henry the Eighth" from the point of view which each might be expected to occupy; and yet Catherine, the martyr-queen, is passed over by the Romanist, and honoured, as scarcely ever woman before or since, by the Protestant, poet. The "schism of England," closed by Wolsey's and Anne Boleyn's downfall, and by the proclamation of the Princess Mary as heiress-apparent to the throne, is Calderon's theme; Shakespeare's object is to paint

"That majestic lord
Who broke the bonds of Rome,"

in his weakness and in his strength; to contrast the differing results of self-seeking and self-forgetting in Wolsey and in Cranmer; finally, to hold up a mirror in which men might see reflected one of the greatest epochs, and most fruitful in great results, in his country's history.

Now Calderon, as will be seen further on, is most successful in his introduction of Spanish monarchs on the stage; but he does not take their reigns, as a whole, for his theme, as does Shakespeare those of English sovereigns: he could not venture on the freedom of handling requisite for such a plan — his own Castilian

loyalty and that of his audience alike forbidding it. The rulers of other nations he deals with simply with a view to the pleasure of his spectators.

Take, for an instance, his "Great Zenobia." There the beauty and learning of the Queen of Palmyra are vividly depicted ; recondite authors like Trebellius and Vopiscus correctly copied in Aurelian's triumphal entrance into Rome, with his fair captive in her golden chains ; and a soothsayer with ambiguous oracles is well introduced. The warning which Zenobia gives her captor in his hour of triumph to beware, by her own example, of the sudden reverses of fortune, is finely conceived. It begins thus :¹ —

"Morn comes forth with rays to crown her,
While the sun afar is spreading
Golden cloths most finely woven,
All to dry her tear-drops pearly.
Up to noon he climbs, then straightway
Sinks,—and then dark night makes ready
For the burial of the sun,
Canopies of black outstretching.—
Tall ship flies on linen pinions,
On with speed the breezes send it,
Small the wide seas seem, and straitened,
To its quick flight onward tending.
Yet one moment—yet one instant—
And the tempest roars, uprearing
Waves that might the stars extinguish,
Lifted for that ship's o'erwhelming.—
Day, with fear, looks ever nightwards ;
Calms must storm await with trembling ;
Close behind the back of pleasure
Evermore stalks sadness dreary."

¹ Assonants, *e, i.*

But the adventures of Decius, a Roman general defeated by Zenobia in battle, and the willing captive of her peerless charms ; the disguise in which, to wipe off his disgrace, he follows Aurelian to the war, and saves him from captivity or death by his resolute defence of a bridge, single-handed ; the nascent love in Zenobia's breast to which Decius owes his own life on that occasion ; the treachery which gives the queen into Aurelian's hands, and the final catastrophe brought about by the vengeance of Decius for his ill-guerdoned services,—above all, the close of the play in which Decius, ascending the slain Aurelian's vacant throne, bids Zenobia share it with him and reign over the proud city which she so recently entered as a captive,—all belong to the romantic drama, and need for their enjoyment a measure of historical oblivion.

But if the chaste and noble Zenobia of authentic story loses as well as gains from Calderon's treatment, the great Semiramis steps forth at his call from her legendary cloud-land, a distinct and awful impersonation of human pride ; to interest us by her strange life and to awe us by her fall, undisturbed and uncontradicted by any true chronicle of her times. That “splendid play,” as Goethe called “The Daughter of the Air,” which tells her story, is divided into two parts. The subject of the first is Semiramis exalted by her beauty to the throne of Assyria ; the second contains her downfall. Menon, general of King Ninus, discovers to his own hurt the charms, which the guardian of the mysteriously-born maiden (knowing them to have been given her for the ruin of many) strives in vain to keep concealed. He asks his master's permission to wed her.

King Ninus looks ; and bids Semiramis choose between his subject and himself. The ambitious woman chooses the monarch, and the unhappy Menon loses for her sake the king's favour, his eyesight, and, at last, his life. The play closes with Ninus and Semiramis seated on their thrones, while shouts of "Long live our Queen!" direct the recently - blinded Menon to her presence. There he generously opens his mouth not to curse but to bless her. But at that moment the gods interpose. A power greater than himself constrains Menon to declare to Ninus the death which awaits him from the fair "gilded mischief" who sits at his side. Thunders and awful portents confirm the truth of his saying to the shuddering king, and then the curtain falls.

The second part is supposed to open many years later. Semiramis is a widow and a mighty queen, the fame of whose exploits fills the earth. She dwells in Babylon the Great, adorned by her with sumptuous palace and hanging garden. Easily does she vanquish the King of Lydia, who, having wedded the sister of Ninus, appears in arms to claim the Assyrian throne for his nephew Nimias from his mother. This son, who perfectly resembles Semiramis in face, is in his unwarlike disposition wholly unlike her. But her people acknowledge his rights, and shout for a man to rule over them. Semiramis, rather enraged than frightened, yields to their request ;—retires to the strictest seclusion in the recesses of her palace, and leaves Nimias to reign. But she soon wearies of inaction, and resolves to repossess herself of the throne by a stratagem. With the help of one trusty follower she has her son seized in his sleep and imprisoned in the solitary chamber which she has

quitted ; then, profiting by his strong likeness to herself, she appears dressed in his robes to rule under his name. Soon men learn to tremble before the haughty and self-reliant bearing of the young king whom they had at first despised for his timidity. Nimias had assured Astræa, his tutor's daughter, of his unchanged affection. The false Nimias coldly bids her wed another. A soldier, who received a first instalment of reward from the new sovereign for having begun the tumult which placed him on the throne, comes for the second, and is ordered by the disguised Semiramis to be flung from a high tower ; while she says, "I am wiser than I was yesterday, and see to-day that all movers of sedition must be punished." Above all, Lidoro, Nimias's unlucky uncle, who had been released by the young prince from degrading confinement, and treated with additional respect at the news that his son was advancing with an army to demand his father's freedom, is ordered back to his chains by the false Nimias ; and told that he too shall be hurled from the battlements should the rescuing host dare to approach the walls. Yesterday Nimias had trembled at the thought of abiding such an adversary's attack : to-day his mien seems strangely altered ; and the false Nimias, fired with martial ardour, sallies out at the head of his troops to meet the foe in the open field, and, as he says, to deal with the son as his mother dealt with the father. But Fortune, which has hitherto been so constant to Semiramis in the battlefield, deserts her when she seeks it in male attire. She receives a mortal wound in the conflict. Bleeding, with failing strength, she stands, withdrawn from the fight but still at bay ; only her assailants are phantoms now,—the eye-

less Menon ; the pale, poisoned Ninus ; Nimias wasted by his dungeon. “Queen to the last,” she resists even these ; till, with the cry, “Daughter of Air, into Air I fade again,” she expires. Loud are the lamentations of the troops over their valiant young monarch. But time presses ; the victor is at the gates ; nothing seems left but to draw Queen Semiramis from her seclusion. The door is burst open, Nimias comes forth, and the whole mystery is explained. Lidoro (escaped before from prison) willingly mediates between his preserver and his own victorious son ; and Astraea regains her faithful lover, and shares his peaceful throne.

These outlines will suffice to show the merits and demerits of Calderon’s ancient-history dramas. The finest of them is one taken from Jewish story, “The Hair of Absalom.” Its main theme is Amnon’s horrible crime and Absalom’s vengeance for it ; of which his rebellion against his father, resulting in his own death, forms the sequel. Skilfully as this, the third act, is arranged, it is surpassed in power by the first and second ; which, taken alone, would be sufficient to stamp their author as a tragic poet of the highest rank. Very noticeable in them is the lull before the storm,—the pretty pastoral scene in which Absalom’s sheep-shearers are awaiting Amnon and his brothers’ coming. Among the peasant girls stands a veiled figure—the injured Tamar. The shepherds are singing :—

“Hasten, herdsmen, to the shearing,
Bleat of sheep and lambkin hearing.
Herdsmen, to the shearing haste,¹
Where our head his shepherds wait.

¹ Assonants in *a*.

1ST SHEPHERD.

Happy are, from this day forward,
 Sheep that drink where crystals lave
 Liquid, flowery banks of Jordan,
 Sheep on thymy salts that graze.
 Herbs shall grow on all our meadows
 'Neath the light of thy fair face,
 For the fields in which thou walkest
 Shall the hot sun parch in vain.
 Why then art thou ever mournful,
 Tamar, fairest of the fair,
 Thou who by thine eyes' pure splendour
 All our mountain glad hast made ?

.
 Give thyself to pleasure, Princess,
 And upon that beauty gaze
 Here in mirror, to thee duteous
 Offered by the crystal wave.

TAMAR.

Nay: I fear myself to see there.

2D SHEPHERD.

.
 See thy very portrait traced
 On this river's faithful canvas,

 Which the flow'rets for thy sake
 Well shall frame with gold and azure.

TAMAR.

I, if beauteous as you say,
 Yet by one foul spot am tarnished ;
 Seeing it, I weep for shame.

2D SHEPHERD.

.
 That too help these watery mirrors :
 Those to whom they show a stain

Stoop to wash within their waters,
And the spot away they take.

TAMAR.

If this spot could fade for water,
Here mine eyes their waters rain.
But such stain as this can only
Traitor's blood to cleanse avail.

.

TEUCA (*carrying a basket of flowers*).¹

All these flowers, in beauty blowing,
I have stolen from the spring ;
They are Love's interpreting,—
Vie with them, thy sweet charms showing.
Herbs and flowers, the freshest, fairest,
Here my basket full discloses ;
Here are jasmines, here are roses,
Humble thyme, carnation rarest.
From the bright pink take sweet greeting,
See the sea-star's brilliant blue,
And the violet's darker hue,
Trodden by Love's foot retreating.

.

(*Gives her a nosegay*.)

TAMAR.

All these flowers of April's painting
Lose their colour, friend, near me ;
Since that flower I long to see
Most, is to the nosegay wanting."

Soon David's royal sons are seen advancing to the rustic feast. A fresh act of insolence on the part of Amnon to the veiled shepherdess revives in the spectator's mind the memory of his former crime ; and then he follows the

¹ In *redondillas*.

rest to the ill-omened banquet. Almost instantly cries are heard within, the doors fly open, and the guests are seen in confusion round Amnon lying dead on the banquet table, with Absalom standing sternly beside him, pointing out to his injured sister the blood which is flowing for her wrongs.

Only one of Calderon's plays from modern history is worthy to stand beside this fine tragedy. Its subject is the defeat and capture of Prince Ferdinand of Portugal, grandson of John of Gaunt; who, taken prisoner in an unfortunate expedition against Fez, refused to ransom himself at the expense of the Christian city of Ceuta, and died of the ill-treatment which that refusal brought upon him. In composing a tragedy on such a theme, Calderon had vast advantages, compared with his other historic subjects: in a time and a place neither hazy and indistinct from vast distance, chronological, geographical, or both, nor yet painfully clear; and yet more in the perfect sympathy which his audience were sure to feel with the disasters of an unsuccessful crusade and the sufferings of a Christian martyr.

The first scene of “The Constant Prince” is laid in the gardens of the King of Fez; where the song we hear from men working in chains is the song of Christian captives, to which the Princess Phœnix is listening. Presently the king himself enters to issue his command to his daughter to prepare for a marriage which he has contracted for her with the King of Morocco.

The underplot of the play is thus begun at once; for the princess loves her father's nephew and general, Muley. But the same scenes introduce us to the main business of the drama in the king's preparations to repel

the Portuguese army. At their landing Prince Henry happens to fall, and his brother Ferdinand, Grand-Master of the Order of Avis, cheers his soldiers whom the omen dismays, and shows his own confidence in God, by saying—

“These common portents, and these terrors vain,¹
 Come to win credence from our Moorish foes,
 Not to dismay the knights of Christ’s own train :
 We two are such. Not here in fight we close
 From vain desire of proud memorial,
 That in the scroll of history brightly shows
 When human eyes upon the record fall ;
 The Faith of God we come to magnify.
 His be the honour, His the glory all,
 If we with good success shall live and die.
 Fearing God’s chastisements men fear aright,
 But no vain terrors wrap them when they dart ;
 We come to serve, not trespass in His sight,—
 Christians ye are, as Christians act your part.”

Thus, like Hector and like Hamlet, the Constant Prince “defies auguries,” and with no better success than they ; for, surrounded by the armies of the kings of Fez and Morocco, the small Christian host suffers inevitable defeat. “Let us do what we came here for—that is, die like brave men for the faith,” says Ferdinand, rushing into the battle with the cry of Avis and Christ on his lips. Taken captive after performing prodigies of valour, we see him next treated as an honoured guest by the King of Fez ; who confidently expects to have Ceuta surrendered to him by the King of Portugal in exchange for his brother’s freedom. The mandate comes in due time. It was signed by a dying hand,—for grief at the

¹ *Terza rima*, slightly irregular

failure of the expedition and at his brother's peril hastened Edward's¹ death. But when Prince Henry appears with it, Ferdinand declines liberty at such a price. A Portuguese warrior, says this Christian Regulus, cannot so sacrifice a city won by his country's best blood ; still less can a true believer allow its churches to be turned into mosques. So he tears the warrant, and prefers to remain a slave among the Moors. The King of Fez sees, with inexpressible rage, the coveted town escape him. “How can you dare keep it from me, if indeed you call me master ?” he asks. “Because it belongs to God and not to me,” is the grave reply. Foiled in his dearest hope, the king is implacable in his revenge. Not the martyr’s death, which he has courted, but a life bitterer than any death, is to be the prince’s portion. Meanly clad, scantily fed, and loaded with chains, he is sent to toil in the royal gardens ; where the sharpest of pangs to his generous spirit arises from the disappointment he has caused the Christian captives, who beguiled their labours there by the hope of shortly sharing in his release. That Prince Henry, who hastens back to Portugal to rouse the nation’s spirit by the story of her prince’s sufferings, will return too late, and that only death can end them, the audience infer from an accidental omen. Phœnix, who has bidden a captive to gather flowers for her, is discussing with an attendant the meaning of a sinister prophecy which had doomed her to be a corpse’s ransom. “Who,” she asks, “can this dead man be, of whom I am to be the price ?” “I,” replies Ferdinand, as the spectators are meant to understand the word ; though all the prince himself means to say is, “I

¹ A name difficult to recognise in its Portuguese disguise—Duarte.

bring you in these flowers the emblems of my fortune." And while the young maiden sees with surprise the once brilliant cavalier, who a short time ago rode so gaily forth with her father to the chase, in the pale and suffering man who stands before her, the prince expands the thought into one of the best of the numerous sonnets scattered through Calderon's plays :—

" These, which, to greet the day's first splendour waking,
Arose a gladness and an exultation,
Shall be at eve vain grief and lamentation—
In the cold arms of night their last sleep taking.
These tints that challenge heaven, new rainbows making
Of ordered gold and snow and deep carnation,
Shall teach us much in one day's brief duration—
Our brittle life with warning terrors shaking.
For as the roses early rise to bloom,
But, as they bloom, old age comes on apace,
Till in one bud they cradle find and tomb,
Even such like fortune waits the human race,
In one day to be born and die their doom ;
For hours, and ages, past leave self-same trace."

When the princess quits the garden, her lover, Muley, comes up to Ferdinand. He wishes to repay him for the freedom he once gave him by a like gift ; and offers at last, when he finds he cannot accomplish it more cheaply, to give his own life to effect his deliverance. But honour forbids the Christian knight to accept this tempting offer, since its fulfilment would involve a breach of faith on Muley's part towards the king. He therefore decides against himself ; and consents (to use his own words), for the sake of his God and his faith, to approve himself a constant prince in his slavery at Fez.

When the third act begins, Ferdinand has nearly finished paying in full the penalty of his self-devotion. The cruel king has exacted it from him to the uttermost farthing, in the vain hope of breaking his spirit and forcing him to yield up to him the much-coveted town. The spectator is prepared for the worst by Muley's account to his master of the fearful condition to which cold and hunger have reduced his captive—a minute and painful enumeration of physical suffering, not without precedent on the Greek stage, but repulsive to modern taste. It does not produce the effect on the king which the speaker desires. Ferdinand can deliver himself when he pleases, he says; his suffering is his own choice. And then his attention is distracted by the entrance of two ambassadors, one from Portugal and one from Morocco. The former has come to offer a large ransom in gold for Ferdinand. "Ceuta or nothing," says the king; and the messenger, who is Alphonso, now King of Portugal (come in disguise to do his own errand), retires to hasten the advance of his army to his uncle's rescue. The other ambassador discloses himself as the King of Morocco, come to fetch his bride in person; and the reluctant Phoenix receives her father's commands to accompany him back, escorted by the unlucky Muley.

But the audience cannot spare much pity for the young lovers' distresses. It is quickly bespoken for a worthier object. The scene changes to the front of the wretched hovels of the Christian slaves. Several of these come forth, with Ferdinand's two especial friends and self-constituted attendants, and carry him out, already in the last stage of extenuation from hunger and disease, to lay

him upon a mat in the sunshine. Then are heard the sublime accents of perfect resignation and thankfulness. Philoctetes in his anguish can do little but complain. Ferdinand can rejoice in his ; because it is endured for the sake of One who suffered more for him.

FERDINAND.

“ Lay me here, that so heaven’s treasure¹
 Of pure light upon me poured
 May the better give me pleasure.
 Infinite and tender Lord !
 Thanks I give Thee in full measure.
 When, as I, Job wretched lay,
 Of his birth he curst the day ;
 Meaning but to curse that sin
 Wrapped in which we life begin.
 But the day I curse not : nay,
 Bless it for the grace God gives
 With it to us ; since there lives
 Not one beauteous hue of light,
 Not one sunbeam flashing bright,
 But with tongue of flame it strives
 Up my praise and thanks to send.

BRITO.

Is it well thus, lord, with thee ?

FERDINAND.

Better than I merit, friend.—
 How much pitying help to me,
 Lord, dost Thou in mercy lend !
 From chill dungeon when they lift me,
 Thou, to warm my frozen blood,
 With Thy glorious sun dost gift me :
 Bounteous art Thou, Lord, and good.”

¹ In *quintillas*.

The faithful Juan goes to seek for food, and the captives depart to their daily labour. Footsteps are heard approaching, and the prince, conceiving it to be his duty to lengthen out his martyrdom by every means in his power, begs food of the persons whom he is too weak to lift his head and look at; but who are, in fact, the king with his attendants escorting his daughter and his intended son-in-law a little way on their departure.

THE KING.

“Faith retained in such sad state,
Wretched and unfortunate,
Grieves, affronts me, more than all.
Master! Prince!

BRITO.

The king doth call.

FERDINAND.

Me? Thou errest: such my fate
That, nor prince nor master, nay,
But the corpse of both am I
Buried long in earth: then say,
‘Prince and master formerly’—
Neither is my name to-day.

THE KING.

If not prince or master here,
Answer me as Ferdinand.

FERDINAND.

At that summons I appear,
Drag my frame, too weak to stand,
On to kiss thy foot.

THE KING.

Thy cheer
 Yet is constant: I would know
 Mean'st thou thus to yield, or brave
 Still my anger ?

FERDINAND.

I would show
 All the reverencee that should owe
 To his master any slave."

And then the prince pours forth a long and earnest supplication for death. It is a speech which, however in harmony with Spanish tastes by its wealth of metaphors and grave reflections, is strangely long and artificial for the circumstances under which it is spoken. But it is noble throughout, and magnificent at the close. Ferdinand begins by imploring success in the suit he is about to prefer, from that magnanimity which ought to be inseparable from the kingly office. Even the lower creation is, he says, made generous by royalty; how much more, then, man? The lion tears not the unresisting; the dolphin rescues the shipwrecked; the eagle will hinder travellers from drinking of a poisoned spring; the pomegranate (queen of fruits), when envenomed, gives warning by turning pale; the diamond (king of stones) shivers into fragments at treason. What pity, then, may not a king among men be expected to show? a pity not restrained even by difference of faith, since all religions unite in forbidding cruelty. Yet mistake me not, he adds, as though I were trying to move thy compassion to give me life. It is too late for that, and death will be no surprise to me. He goes on:¹—

¹ Assonants in the original in *u* and *e*, replaced here by *a*.

“ Well I know that I am mortal,
That for man no hour is safe,
And it was for this that wisdom
One material gave and shape
To the coffin and the cradle.

At our birth this signal makes
Unto us the world of welcome ;
That, within the cradle laid,
It secures us, sides turned upward ;
But, when, in contempt or hate,
It desires to cast us from it,
Then its hands turn downward straight,

And what cradle was face upwards,
Coffin-grows when downward placed.
We thus near to death live ever ;
Close is our last resting-place
As our cradle ever to us
From our birth. If such man’s state,
What can one who knows this look for ?
Not life ; that at least is plain :
Death, ’tis death that now I ask for,
Having long desired to lay
Life down, if kind heaven would grant it,
For the Faith. Nor think despair
Prompts to this, of life made weary.
No ; ’tis love, to yield up fain
Life in Faith’s defence most righteous,
And to God an offering make
Of my life and soul united.—
But, if pity nought can gain,
Let thy wrath arise and smite me,
Vent on me thy fiercest rage,
Since, though hotter grow my torments,
Sharper yet these cruel pains,
Fiercer yet on me thy rigours,

Me, though yet worse miseries waste,
Though I yet worse hunger suffer,
Ragged, stripped of raiment bare,
Though I lie midst dust and ashes,
Firm I still cleave to the Faith ;
For it is the sun which lights me
(Light that points my course out plain),
And my victor's crown of laurel.
Thou shalt no proud triumph take
O'er the Church : if such thy pleasure,
O'er me triumph here abased ;
God will rise, my cause maintaining,
For 'tis His that I maintain.

THE KING.

Canst thou boast, and consolation
In thy very sufferings find ?
How, then, speak my condemnation,
If they stir not my compassion,
Rousing none in thine own mind ?
Since thy death from thine own hand
Comes, and not from my command,
Hope not any help from me.
Pity first thyself, then see
How I pity,—Ferdinand !”

The court follow. When the king and his train have departed, Juan arrives to give his friend a little bread, which he has brayed cruel blows to obtain for him.

JUAN.

"Take it.

FERDINAND.

Faithful friend ! But late
Is thy coming, for my state
Sinks to death.

JUAN.

High heaven, bestow
On me comfort in such woe !

FERDINAND.

On what ill does death not wait ;
Since man lives of death the prey,
And in this his case perplexed,
Must be long by sickness vexed,
Growing strong at last to slay ?
Man, beware ! nor heedless stay ;
Truth's attentive follower be,
Mindful of eternity.
Wait not till some other ill
Warn thee ; surest far to kill
Is thine own infirmity.
Footsteps on the solid ground
Man at every moment makes ;
Falls each step he onward takes
On his own sepulchral mound.
Sentence, that may well confound
Every heart, it is to know
That each step must forward go,
And be not reversed once taken ;
By stern law, to which unshaken
God Himself cannot say 'No.'
Friends, mine end now comes on fast ;
Lift, and bear me from this place.

JUAN.

Let me die in this embrace.

FERDINAND.

Noble Juan, hear one last
Prayer : 'tis this—when death is past,
Strip me of this raiment old,
Fetching from our hut unrolled
My great Order's cloak, by me
Borne through long years faithfully :

Bury me, wrapped in its fold,
 Face unveiled, should, pityingly
 Softened, the king's wrath endure
 That I here find sepulture.
 Mark my grave, for hope have I
 That, although I captive die,
 I shall, ransomed, lie one day
 Where, by altars, priests can pray ;
 For, since I, my God, to Thee
 Many churches gave, to me
 One, I know, Thou wilt repay."

The audience feel that they have heard a martyr's last words, when Ferdinand is borne away to die inside his humble hovel ; and the curtain falls.

It rises again on a brilliant scene, where arms are flashing and banners waving. It is the rescuing force under Alphonso, King of Portugal, led by himself and by his uncle, Don Henry ; about to attack the King of Morocco on his way from Fez. Henry, mindful of former misfortune, counsels a prudent halt at nightfall, saying—

" See how already night,
 The gloomy-shadowed, has day's chariot bright
 In darkness hidden from our eyes away.

ALPHONSO.

Then let us fight without the day,
 For at the Faith's clear call,
 No force, no season, shall my heart appal.
 If, Ferdinand, those pangs which thou dost bear
 For God, to God thou offerest, pleading them in prayer,
 Our arms must be victorious,
 My work be praised, and His great name made glorious.

HENRY.

Thy pride misleads thee far.

Voice of FERDINAND (from within).

Attack them, great Alphonso ! On to war !

(*A trumpet sounds.*)

ALPHONSO.

Hear'st thou a muffled cry
Piercing the winds which mournful round us sigh ?

HENRY.

Yes ; and with it I heard
The signal trump that to the onset stirred.

ALPHONSO.

Then to the onset, Henry ! all persuades
That heaven to-day will aid our cause.

FERDINAND (*rising from the now thick darkness, wearing the cloak of his Order, and holding a torch.*)

Ah, yes : it aids.

For heaven's favour, gained
By zeal of thine, and love, and faith maintained
To-day thy cause defends,
And thee to free me from my slavery sends ;
Now that God offers me,
For churches many, one great church in fee.
Hence I with torch am sent,
Clear shining, lit at fountain orient,
Still to march on before,
Thy proud host's guide until the fight is o'er,
Till thou, with trophies great
As is thy wish, of Fez shalt reach the gate ;
At the dawn's birthplace not thy head to crown,
But me to free whose sun went early down."

(*Vanishes.*)

The darkness settles over the army as it rushes onwards, and the scene changes. We are once more at

Fez. It is the next morning, and the king is standing stern, with lowering brow, over the coffin of his victim, and pronouncing the cruel sentence, that the man who has now effectually deprived him of Ceuta shall have no burial. Just at this moment the morning light shines on a victorious army, with several prisoners, advancing to the walls of Fez ; yet, in spite of its victory, with muffled drums and other signs of woe. Its leader is a mysterious form, who vanishes, torch in hand, with these words :—

“ I, by paths that no man knows of,
Through the horror of night’s darkness,¹
Safe have guided thee ; now sunlight
All the murky clouds has parted,
And, victorious, great Alphonso,
Thou, with me, by Fez now standest.
Lo ! at last the wall of Fez,
Treat before it of my ransom.”

Trumpets sound to demand a parley, and the king looks down from the battlement in dismay on his daughter and her betrothed, the King of Morocco, now Alphonso’s captives ; who, standing forth, bids the King of Fez yield him up the Grand Master in exchange for them, or endure to see his daughter put to death. The king finds a difficulty in answering, and Phœnix, mistaking the cause of his hesitation, overwhelms him with reproaches. “ Nay,” he replies to her, “ it is not that I begrudge thee thy life ; it is mine that the stars are conspiring to take from me by slaying thee. Know, Alphonso, that the exchange which thou proposest is no longer in my power. This coffin holds all that is left of the prince. Kill my beauteous Phœnix, and let my

¹ Assonants in *a, e.*

blood pay for thine. I shall die myself soon after.” “Not so,” is Alphonso’s generous answer.

“ King of Fez, lest thou consider
That dead Ferdinand in value
Weighs less than this living beauty,
I for his dear corpse exchange her.
Send me, therefore, snow for crystals,
January for May the radiant,
Withered roses for thy diamonds,—
Yea, send death for beauty rarest.”

The prophecy which marked Phœnix out as the “price of the dead” is thus accomplished. The king, as he delivers her to her father, intercedes with him in behalf of her marriage with Muley; the Christian prisoners are set free to bear their dead deliverer to the Portuguese fleet, while the brother and royal nephew—who sadly embrace the dear relics which are henceforth to be the sacred treasure of their cathedral—mingle gladness with their tears as they pay their reverent homage to the martyr.

So ends Calderon’s finest historical play—a play the central figure of which is well worth comparing, and contrasting, with the “Hippolytus” of Euripides and the “Philoctetes” of Sophocles, as his noble features, perfected by suffering, meet us amid the crowd of Calderon’s gallants, like Galahad’s amid the knights of Arthur’s court. Cousin, as he was, of the victor of Agincourt, English common-sense and sturdy courage look something prosaic beside Spanish chivalric piety, when we summon to stand together at the bar of our imagination the “Henry the Fifth” of Shakespeare and Calderon’s “Constant Prince.”

CHAPTER III.

HIS COMEDIES.

CALDERON's comedies will not satisfy the expectations raised by their name in a reader's mind who takes his notions of comedy from Aristophanes or from Molière. A sense of humour was by no means one of their author's strongest points. The buffoons whom he introduces to diversify the more serious scenes of his grave compositions generally do their work but poorly; and their place in his lighter plays is neither more prominent nor better filled. He presents his audience at times with a genuinely comic character, such as his stupid and proud country gentleman, in the play entitled "Beware of Still Water," or his "Précieuse Ridicule,"¹ in that called "There is no Jesting with Love." But even out of such personages he is far from extracting the full amount of fun which Molière would have made his audience derive from them; and their appearances in Calderon's comedies are few and far between. On what, then, it may be asked, do these plays depend for their charm?—a charm so great, that at least one good German critic has given

¹ This lady, who calls her gloves *chirothecas*, and always speaks in cultured style, is the original of Molière's two cousins.

them the preference to all their many-sided author's other dramatic works. And the answer must be, that the attractive power which they possess arises from two sources—strong singly, in combination irresistible. The first is, the hold they lay on the spectator's curiosity. “Calderon particularly excels in the accumulation of surprises, in connecting one difficult situation with another, and in maintaining undiminished the strongly-excited interest to the close of the piece.”¹ Thus all the satisfaction which can be received from witnessing a triumph of human ingenuity, is bestowed by the best of his comedies. And, in the second place, they delight us in a more durable manner by their poetic conception of life, by the high-bred tone of the thorough gentlemen and ladies who enact the principal parts in them, and by the brilliant rainbow tints with which Calderon's fancy enlivens even “cheap forms and common hues,” when he is obliged to present them to us.

Ulrici has said that the pervading thought in Calderon's comedies is that of the vanity of earthly life. Certainly in them circumstances seem stronger than man—design fails where accident succeeds: strong purpose comes to nothing, and some sudden incident precipitates the resolve which will shape the man's whole future course. An unseen Hand is divined throughout them (scarcely felt), moulding into form

“Our ends,
Rough-hew them as we may.”

Thus, though by another road, Calderon's comedies attain the same goal as Shakespeare's. To compare

¹ Bouterwek.

them (similar as their titles often are) would be an unwise and an ungrateful task. Something has already been said of that deficiency of humorous powers which disqualified Calderon from excelling in pure comedy at all; and most completely so from entering the lists against the prince of humorists. He could, indeed, place two loving couples even more hopelessly at cross purposes than Shakespeare's two pairs of bewildered lovers in "*Midsummer's Night's Dream*"; but the immortal troop of actors who rehearse their play hard by in the mazy woodland glades are beyond his reach. He has heroines in plenty, unjustly suspected, like the betrothed of Claudio in "*Much Ado about Nothing*"; but when has he succeeded in establishing their innocence by the intervention of a Dogberry or a Verges? Nor is it possible to place the best of Calderon's personages in comedy on the same line as even Shakespeare's worst, in point of individuality. Few of the Spanish poet's leave any marked trace in the spectator's mind at all; and, while Shakespeare need not fear to repeat the same incident in two comedies, because the people to whom it occurs are so different, Calderon's men and women are so like one another that all his ingenuity cannot protect us from a painful sense of sameness if we read too many of his comedies together. Read Shakespeare's thirteen, one after the other, and you will feel that in each you are introduced to a new world. Try the same experiment with Calderon's forty; and, instead of admiring the skill and enterprise with which Shakespeare each time reclaims and brings into cultivation a fresh piece of virgin soil, it will seem to you that you have but been watching an industrious market-

gardener getting a fresh crop every month from the same small plot of ground ; that you have been walking in a trim Dutch garden, instead of surveying the “bowery loneliness” of some fair sylvan scene, beyond which the blue sea glitters with its suggestion of infinity.

This being so, a few typical specimens of Calderon’s comedy will suffice. These are offered with one prefatory observation—namely, that the code of morals here observed (though not so completely the reverse of the ordinary one as that good-naturedly invented by Lamb for his Elizabethan dramatists) varies from the usual standard in some important particulars. It allows to a lady, or to a gentleman in a lady’s defence, an unlimited privilege of falsehood ; and it enjoins on a knight to draw his sword without hesitation for honour’s sake (so-called), not merely against friend or brother, but even against the sister who has dared to follow the example which he has himself set her with the sister of some other cavalier. The reader who kindly bears this in mind will seldom find anything to object to in the conduct of the polished gentlemen who, in Calderon’s dramas of the “cloak and sword,” drape the former around them so gracefully, and use the latter so well ; any more than in the demeanour of the dignified ladies for, or against, whom these swords are drawn. The world in which these fair creatures live would be, in truth, a goodly one, if it were not for the drawbacks just mentioned ; for it is a world of brilliant sunshine and clear moonlights—of sweet blossoms and tinkling guitars : a world, too, if full of ceremonious courtesies, yet pervaded by real simplicity of feeling, shown by devoted friendships and by passionate love.

First let us look, however, at an example of Calderon's foreign comedy. "A Man his own Jailer" has its scene in southern Italy. Prince Frederic of Sicily has accidentally killed Prince Sforza in a joust held in honour of his cousin Margaret, Princess of Naples. Outlawed as if for a murder, he gets rid of his tell-tale armour; and, as a merchant in distress, is received into the household of Helena, sister of the man whom he has slain, and made custodian of her castle of Belflor. Meanwhile Margaret, who secretly loves him, is tortured by anxiety for his safety. Before long she is agonised by tidings of his arrest. But the man whom the king's officers have seized is, in reality, a very different person,—a foolish peasant, Benito by name, who found the prince's cast-off dress and put it on. The king, in deference to his loved daughter's wishes, promises to treat his captive well. The soldiers who took him say the prince must be mad, or else he feigns madness. The king sends for him, and, well pleased with his own skill in penetrating his disguise, regards Benito's vulgar pronunciation and manners as a piece of consummate acting; and tells him that his princely qualities shine forth like the sun from behind the clouds, in which it is his pleasure to veil them from sight. The respectful recognition of Benito as his master, by which Frederic's servant, Robert, seeks to insure his real master's safety, confirms the king in his delusion, and he sends the supposed prince to be guarded at the castle of Belflor; where the genuine Frederic, having the false one under his charge, becomes in a sense "his own jailer." To Belflor come soon after Margaret and her father; the latter desirous of terminating all disputes by a marriage.

Meanwhile Benito has been rising (like the renowned Christopher Sly) to an appreciation of the greatness that has been thrust upon him, and has got half-way to believing himself a prince in good earnest. He has overcome his awe of the state bed, whose magnificence he at first respected by sleeping on the floor ; and indeed finds it so comfortable that he is very unwilling to leave it at all. The musicians who attend his levée perform music of a too high class for him, and he commits himself by asking them for a vulgar song ; but he has learnt to like to eat off plate, and finds a prince's fare entirely to his taste. His education in princedom has made these small advances, when a visit from the king and his daughter is announced to him. Margaret speaks to Benito, but her speech is meant for Frederic. Her father, convinced on a closer inspection that the uncouthness of the supposed prince is natural, not assumed, looks with horror and amazement at his proposed son-in-law ; and when Benito, having sent for chairs, coolly seats *himself* first, and says, “*I* am comfortable, and, since there are more chairs here than one, will your Majesty sit down ?” whispers to his daughter, “Will you still praise his manners ?” He is confounded by her reply, “They deserve praise. How gracefully he took his seat and motioned you to another. Fame lies : he is even more charming than he has been reported to be.”

THE KING.

“ ‘Tis not love ; ‘tis madness briefly
That to faults like his can blind.

MARGARET.

Love to madness near we find.

THE KING (*addressing BENITO*).

What has brought me hither chiefly
Is the wish to speak a word,
On your brother's coming here,
With your highness.

BENITO.

Why, I ne'er
That I had a brother heard.

ROBERT.

That the prince, your brother, will
Soon be here, he says, 'tis plain.

BENITO.

Says he "Brother, Prince" ? again,
Not known here, so say I still.
'Tis your fault ; who till to-day
Hid from me by silence bad
That a brother prince I had ;
But for that you now shall pay. (*Beats him.*)

THE KING (*to MARGARET*).

Now, what canst thou say to me ?
Is he courteous ? is he wise ?

MARGARET.

Why, his grace must all surprise ;
None can make me laugh as he.

THE KING.

When man so ungraceful ever
Saw I ? Can *he* win thy grace ?

MARGARET.

Wrath looked good seen in *his* face.

THE KING.

Good ! say'st thou ? I swear that never
 Will I yield to him thy hand,—
 Not though, fighting valiantly,
 With my people's blood should dye
 His fierce brother all this land.

MARGARET.

Then (though I away must fling
 Pride and dignity to own
 My poor foolish love ; made known
 To my father and my king)
 I my wish to wed proclaim,
 From a love devout and true
 Him, here listening in your view,
 Frederic, whom as lord I name.

FREDERIC (*aside*).

Great my hope at such reply.

BENITO.

Sure this great good-will and love
 Lady-cousin shows, must move
 To my suit your Majesty.

MARGARET.

Is he not of Sicil great
 Princely heir ? then wherefore say
 That my love has gone astray ?

THE KING.

To a boor with addled pate !

MARGARET.

Nay, he's wise : the world has set
 High his wit and bravery.

BENITO.

Truly great's the love that I
From my lady cousin get.

THE KING.

My confusion grows. How, how ?
He discreet ? 'Tis an abyss.
This a prince ?

MARGARET.

Yea, surely ; this
Same who sees and hears us now."

This diverting scene is brought to an end by the arrival of Frederic's brother ; come to effect his deliverance either by negotiation or by arms. His surprise at hearing that the king's intention to marry his own daughter to his captive has been changed by that captive's imbecility, and his yet greater astonishment at having the uncouth Benito presented to him as his brother, may be imagined. The necessary explanations follow, and the curtain falls on a happy group ; for Benito is dismissed to his peasant bride with a gift of two thousand crowns, to reward him for having been, as he says, the fiddler to whose music all the rest have danced.

The rest of this chapter must be devoted to the national comedies. An outline of some of the more complicated of these, with their endless series of surprises, such as "April and May Mornings," or "It is Hard to Guard a House with Two Doors," would fatigue the reader. "A Plague on Love" has a story which can be followed more easily. At its commencement Angela is doing her brother, Don Alvaro, the service of receiving with elaborate courtesy

Beatrice, the object of his affections. “How can you say you are out of spirits when you look so charming?” cries she. “What splendid hair, Louisa!” But when the handmaid, so appealed to, has responded suitably, there is a muttered “Never did I see a woman’s head so ill-dressed,” which makes Louisa exclaim to the audience, “Ladies, beware; our best friend praises us like that.” Angela is entering on her brother’s interests, and discovering what good progress he has made in Beatrice’s regard, when a certain Don Diego comes into the room, with apologies for intruding on the lady of the house (with whom he is unacquainted), from his wish to speak with Beatrice. This wish is evidently not mutual; but the unwelcome lover perseveres, and proceeds to offer Beatrice a rich jewel which he pretends to have found outside the door, evidently dropped by her as she went into the house. “It is not mine,” says the lady; having no wish to take a costly gift from a suitor whom she will not favour. “Let me look at it,” says Angela; and after a moment’s survey of the diamond she pronounces it her own; and, with thanks to the cavalier for its restoration, she hands it to her waiting-maid, bidding her fasten it on better another time. “I mean to punish him for his presumption in offering it to you,” she whispers to Beatrice; while poor Don Diego, not liking to proclaim his little stratagem, sees his handsome present thus appropriated with a vexation which is not diminished by Angela’s request that he would now depart, lest her brother should enter and be displeased to find a stranger with his sister. “He is just coming in,” exclaims Louisa. “What does it matter?” says Diego. “I have only to tell him that I came here to give you your

jewel." "Not so," says Angela, "for it is a jewel that he does not know that I possess. Rather than make him suspect either Beatrice or myself unjustly, hide yourself in this adjoining chamber, and slip out as soon as he is gone." Diego has no choice, but must do as the lady bids him, ill as she has treated him. Don Alvaro, entering directly after and addressing Beatrice as a lover, adds jealousy to his other annoyances. "I think you will never contrive to find another jewel, if you get away safely to-night," whispers the waiting-maid to the unlucky man; when, after a ceremonious leave-taking, Beatrice goes, but Alvaro stays behind, so that the longed-for opportunity of Diego's getting quietly away seems as if it would never occur. "What is the good of not having a lover, if I am to be doomed to as many frights as if I had one;" says Angela, as her brother sits down and calmly begins to write a letter in the room which Diego must traverse before he can get into the street. Presently a clash of swords is heard outside; a cavalier and his squire rush in with naked weapons, and Don Juan, Alvaro's chief friend, appeals to him for protection. Newly arrived at Madrid, he has just killed a robber who assailed him, and is fleeing from Spanish justice,—more formidable often to the innocent than to the guilty. Alvaro goes into his sister's apartment to bespeak a bed for his friend, finds Don Diego, and instantly runs him through with his sword. He next turns on poor Angela, against whom appearances are very strong; but Juan defends her, saying that he will fight the dearest friend he has in defence of a lady's life. "Flee," he bids her, "while I can yet keep your brother from pursuing you." "Not so," replies Angela, boldly;

"I had rather die guiltless than live on condition of seeming guilty." Her brother, struck by her tone of innocence, stays his hand for a moment. Angela briefly explains the truth; and offers to die next morning if Beatrice does not confirm her story then. Peace is being restored on these terms, when a loud knocking is heard at the street door, and a notary and some alguazils enter. They have found a dead man outside, and have heard that his slayer is within. "There he is," says Angela promptly, pointing to the bleeding and insensible Diego. "He fainted from loss of blood, after imploring our protection; and we were so busy trying to restore him that we paid little attention to your first knocks." There is nothing to contradict her story. The man seems dying; so (sending for a confessor and a surgeon) the alguazil commends him for the night to Alvaro's good offices, and withdraws, satisfied with a promise to produce him should he survive till morning. Angela is locked up in her chamber till her innocence can be established; and Juan (whose love for Dona Beatrice was the magnet which drew him to Madrid, and who has made the unwelcome discovery that at least two lovers are courting her there) retires for the night exclaiming, "A plague on love!" to which his squire Hernando heartily says "Amen."

When therefore next morning Alvaro returns from an early interview with Beatrice, in which she has at once exculpated Angela and revealed her own affection for himself, Juan cannot share all his friend's satisfaction. He shares however his anxiety as to the next visit of the alguazils, who will find Diego recovered (he had only fainted from loss of blood), and able to give his own ver-

sion of the story. Hernando advises them to consult the lady whose cleverness he admired so much the previous evening,¹ and they proceed to do so. "Is my sentence life or death?" asks Angela. "Embrace me," replies her brother, "I have seen Beatrice; and your innocence is established." "Have you a single doubt left?" rejoins the lady. "No." "I was waiting for that," continues Angela; "Louisa give me my cloak." "What for?" questions Alvaro. "That I may leave you at once," is the answer, "and never hear or see you again. Now that you are at last satisfied, I am resolved never more to expose myself to your unjust suspicions." It is only at Don Juan's intercession that Angela consents to forgive her brother. She will stay, she says, to please the man who saved her life. As a pledge of pardon, she begins to discuss Don Diego's case with them; but is interrupted by his entrance, weak still, but anxious to leave the house in a sedan-chair. Angela bids the gentlemen withdraw; and, left alone with Diego, restores to him his unlucky diamond, and encourages his departure. Alvaro and Juan returning, are rather surprised to find him gone. Hernando makes an insolent speech about it, and Don Juan shows his nascent love for Angela by breaking his poor squire's head. Angela is kindly binding it up, while the friends go out for a healing salve, when the alguazils' second visit takes place. They want to take the wounded man's deposition. "He is so much better," says Angela, "as to be preparing to leave our house." She points to Hernando while she says so, whose bleeding head confirms her

¹ "Why, she lies as well as I could do it myself!" was his complimentary exclamation.

statement. “They cannot know much about this lady if they believe what *she* tells them,” mutters the squire when they take him into custody,—an imprisonment which is, however, of short duration, as he is proved to have acted on the defensive. Through the rest of the play he retains a wholesome dread of Angela’s cleverness; and when a veiled lady, who haunts his master, performs any unusually subtle trick, he never fails to say, “I think this must be another sister of another friend of yours.” Hernando is wrong, however, for the mysterious fair one is Angela herself, as cunning on her own behalf as on that of others; and the comedy concludes in the usual way, with Alvaro gladly resigning the charge of his dangerous sister to Juan, and wedding Juan’s first love, Beatrice, himself.

Another Angela, the heroine of Calderon’s “Fairy Lady,” is as full of devices as the former one, but not so boldly untruthful. She is a beautiful young widow living in her brother’s house; who tells her one day of an expected guest, and, as he is a young cavalier, begs her to keep out of his way. This piques her curiosity. Soon after, her gratitude also is excited by the stranger. She has gone out rather indiscreetly (in the muffled and veiled style usual on such expeditions) to see some public rejoicings, has narrowly escaped recognition by her brother, and has got away safe owing to Don Manuel’s interposition in her behalf. A secret entrance (known only to herself and her maid) leads from Dona Angela’s apartment to the guest’s. She profits by this to slip into Manuel’s room several times when she knows him to be not within the house, and to leave notes behind her expressive of the grateful feelings of the unknown lady.

whom he befriended. Her maid is more mischievous ; she steals the purse of Manuel's servant and leaves ashes in its place. As the room has only one visible door which was never unlocked during their absence, these tokens amaze both master and man on their return. The master keeps his perplexity to himself, thinking that, if he showed his host the notes, some lady who possessed the master-key of the rooms might be compromised. His attendant is more frightened than perplexed. For to him it is evident that the room is haunted ; and that by an evil fairy of far from honest disposition. Henceforth he declines to stay in it without his master's protection, and so leaves the coast more clear for Angela. Nor does even Don Manuel's protection always avail him. As they are entering their room one evening a mysterious form swiftly puts out the light carried by the servant, and leaves a note in his master's hand. This note is an answer to one left by Manuel where the fairy's billet was found by him ; and contains the intelligence that he is in error in his first thoughts about her, as with her his host neither is, nor possibly can be, in love. Angela is still more nearly caught next time. Hearing that the cavalier has gone away for the night, she boldly carries a light into his room, where he has unexpectedly returned and is groping in the dark for some important papers. The beautiful apparition seems to the servant a response to the ineautiful wish he had just been expressing that the obliging fairy would come and hold his master a flambeau. But Don Manuel resolves to penetrate the secret, and boldly lays hands on the lovely vision. With marvellous presence of mind Angela promises to tell him all, if he will but close the outer door ; and, the moment he

has turned his back, slips through the secret opening. Last of all she invites him to her own house on conditions—one of which is, that he is to be brought there in a sedan-chair of her own providing. In this he is carried by such devious ways in the dark, that he has no notion he is being brought back to his friend's house. He enters: a vision of beauty meets him. Angela stands, splendidly dressed, and attended by various handmaids, in a brilliantly lighted room, and bids him to a sumptuous collation. But his pleasure is shortlived; a knock is heard outside, and the ladies tell Manuel to withdraw. An attendant slips him through a door, and he finds himself in the dark. Some one stirs; he hears his own servant's voice, and discovers to his astonishment that he is in no distant quarter of the city, as he supposed he was, but in his own room. His servant's surprise is even greater, when an unseen hand draws him (by mistake for his master) through the secret door. The fairy ladies salute him as an Amadis or a Belianis, and gravely offer him refreshing drinks as a preparation for the two-hundred-league journey which they propose to take him. But to Don Manuel the discovery that the fairy lady is an inmate in his friend's house brings pain. He dreads to be accused of treachery. In a few moments more the sport in the adjoining room is turned to earnest. Angela has to throw herself for protection against her angry brother on his guest's pity. "No man shall defend my sister but her own husband," says the young swordsman. The spell the beautiful fairy has cast on Manuel is strong; and he readily assents to that condition.

The cleverness shown by the two Angelas in gaining a husband is put by Beatrice, in "To-morrow will differ

from To-day," to a more legitimate purpose. She employs hers in retaining the allegiance of her betrothed, Don Ferdinand; which has been shaken by the information of his cousin, Leonora, that Beatrice de Ayala, whose beauty and grace have delighted him so much at his first interview with her, has a gallant already in the person of Don Juan de Leiva. Now this Don Juan is in truth a brother, who has assumed a different name from the rest of the family, from which he lives apart, being on bad terms with his father; but who, nevertheless, meeting his sister from home under suspicious circumstances, has exercised his privileges as a Spanish brother and drawn his sword on her, in what the other lady (ignorant of their relationship) has fancied to be a transport of jealous rage. Don Ferdinand, divided between sentiments of love and honour, tells Beatrice's father that, owing to the dangerous illness of his own, he must leave Madrid instantly; and when pressed first to complete the marriage, responds with some coldness. Beatrice sees through the pretext; but, not knowing what the charge against herself is, keeps him in Madrid, to give herself time to discover and refute it, by writing to him notes from two imaginary ladies, each of whom desires a private interview. She enacts the person of each herself; and (in that of Dona Brianda) extracts from him the avowal that it is a favoured rival who is driving him from the city, "Have you seen him yourself?" she asks. "No; but heard of him from an eye-witness." "Eyes may deceive us as well as ears," says the unknown; adding in illustration—

"Nought shows clearer to our eyes
Than peilucid water bright,

Yet its clearness mocks the sight,
And within its depths tells lies.
For the proof let this suffice,
That the very shapeliest oar
Bent appears, though straight before,
Airy sphere for watery leaving :—
Where find truth then, if, deceiving,
Crystal clear tells truth no more ?
Nought is more distinct to view
Than the sun's light, yet its beaming
Rays, in fiery lustre streaming,
Never to our gaze speak true.
One thing of the purple hue,
Other of the snow's they say,
Each time coloured diverse way,
As a different tint keeps dyeing :—
Where can we rest safe relying,
If deceives the light of day ?
Nought looks plainer to be seen
Than that azure heaven on high,
Yet, in truth, there is no sky ;
And that atmospheric screen,
Searched by eye both strong and keen,
Still its colour doubtful leaves :—
If the veil heaven's azure weaves
Is a falsehood, whither turning
Can we look for truth, discerning
That the very heaven deceives ?
Therefore to reported ill
Ere thy full belief be given,
Take example from the heaven,
From sun's light and crystal rill,—
Touch the truth, deep hidden still
'Neath false semblance ; if it borrow
Now dark shades to cause thee sorrow,
Boldly fling them off and wait,
Till upon thine altered state
Shines a better sun to-morrow."

It is no marvel that Ferdinand professes his ears to be as much charmed by the discourse of Brianda as his eyes had been by the beauty of Beatrice ; and that he gladly gives her the ring which is to pledge him to remain eight days longer in Madrid, and her to reveal herself to him at the end of that time. In the character of her second incognita, the countess, Beatrice speaks with Ferdinand in the dark ; and, on his expressing a wish to see her face, promises that he shall do so next morning at mass ; and bidding him give her some token which she can wear for him to know her by, receives for that purpose his embroidered gloves. That self-same evening, however, accident brings her face to face with Ferdinand in her own proper character. He rushes unawares into her father's house to avoid a street brawl. " You still in Madrid ! " says the lady, and then a few minutes after, " Your servant has told me your reason for staying there in secret," proceeding to give him the minutest particulars of his interviews with the two ladies. " Do not oblige me," says Ferdinand, " to say what I had meant never to utter in my life, that I had to fly from you ; and that not because I loved another, or held discourse with her——" . . . " Did you not ? " says a veiled lady, stepping forward. " Do you know this ring ? " " No, lady," says the cavalier, surprised into falsehood. " If not," says another veiled damsels, " you will surely know these gloves." " You see that my lady the countess, and Brianda the discreet, are both here," says Beatrice. " It was my contrivance to detain you till the truth could be made clear to you." Don Juan de Leiva enters, and is made known as the brother of Beatrice ; while his intended wife, Elvira, explains that it was

only through her complaisance in accompanying herself to a meeting with Juan that poor Beatrice incurred the wrongful suspicions which so nearly cost her her husband. Don Ferdinand humbly begs his lady's pardon, which is readily accorded to him.

In “A Poor Man is Full of Tricks,” a man shows himself as ready in expedient as any of Calderon's women; but the shifts to which the poor and quick-witted Don Diego Osorio resorts in order to provide himself with money, and the skill with which he palms off a worthless chain on an unsuspecting lady as a valuable gift, are instances of sadly misapplied talents. For her wealth he is courting a rich heiress, Dona Clara; for his own pleasure he is carrying on a flirtation with the poor but charming Beatrice, to whom he is known by a feigned name,—that of Dionis de Vela. All goes well with him at first—indeed each lady is on the point of rejecting a worthier lover for his sake—when on one unlucky day they meet and exchange confidences. Clara is engaged in sounding the praises of Diego, Beatrice is loud in those of Dionis, when (little expecting to meet her there) the man who answers to both names enters the apartment. He starts at the unwelcome sight, but makes up his mind with admirable promptness, and comes in, bowing affectionately to Clara and ceremoniously to Beatrice; whose name as a perfect stranger he inquires of her friend. Beatrice concludes from this that her lover for some reason does not wish to acknowledge her before Clara. To secure a moment's speech with him she pretends to faint. The lady of the house goes to fetch a glass of water, and Beatrice begins her reproaches; but, to her consternation, they are met by a

polite assurance that she is mistaken : the chain she is wearing was not the gift of the cavalier now before her ; he never even heard the name of Dionis de Vela ; in fact, he is not aware that he ever saw her in his life. Poor Beatrice leaves her friend's house annoyed and bewildered, but by no means convinced. She is made to doubt the evidence of her own senses, however, by a confederate of Diego's ; who remarks in her presence that he has just met his friend's double in the street, and ascertained that another gentleman in Madrid is so exactly like Dionis that they are being constantly mistaken for one another. Ines, the waiting-maid, completely taken in by this, remarks that the gentleman whom they saw at Dona Clara's is certainly unlike Don Dionis in several respects, particularly as to height. But Beatrice, though shaken in her conviction, is not fully satisfied, and determines to test the story. So she writes to appoint 3 P.M. as the hour when Dionis is to visit her next ; and then arranges with Clara to send her a jewel, which she wants to borrow, at the same hour of the same day by the hands of Don Diego. This is a very clever plan, but the double-named cavalier is cleverer still. He secures the services of an obliging alguazil, employs a man dressed as a gentleman to feign a quarrel with himself ; is seen by Beatrice fighting with him under her window a few minutes before three o'clock, and then marched off under custody towards the prison ; and, having thus disposed of Don Dionis, he changes his dress with incredible swiftness, and enters Beatrice's apartment (jewel in hand) at the prescribed hour in the character of Don Diego. Beatrice is at last perfectly satisfied ; and, having no longer cause to feel jealous of

Clara, goes out with her into the park, and begins to tell her of the curious resemblance between their lovers. At this moment they see Diego advancing with four others; and, suspecting the truth that one or more duels are about to be fought, hide themselves and watch. They hear Leonelo, Clara's faithful lover for the past two years, challenge the man who is supplanting him in her good graces by the name of Diego Osorio; and Don Felix, who loves Beatrice, defy him for a similar reason by the name of Dionis de Vela. And they hear both challenges accepted with the cynical avowal that there is no shame in using stratagems with ladies.

Beatrice at once comes out of her concealment and gives Felix her hand, bidding her tricky suitor return and tell his friends at Granada how the ladies at Madrid like his stratagems. "If I have lost her sovereign beauty," says Diego on their departure, "at least I may hope for Clara's wealth;" and he begins his duel with Leonelo. "Learn the advantage of telling ladies lies," says Dona Clara to him, coming forth in her turn from her hiding-place; "there is my hand, Leonelo."

There is some genuine fun in "*The Feigned Astrologer*" (copied at second-hand by Dryden); where the gentleman, who has pretended to have discovered a lady's secret by his knowledge of the stars, is perpetually pestered by requests from ridiculous applicants to exercise for them the skill which he has falsely claimed.¹ There

¹ This play, as well as "*The Fairy Lady*" and "*The Phantom Gallant*," show Calderon's freedom from the vulgar superstitions of his day. He could believe in the apparition of a departed saint as a miracle worked for some adequate cause; but from spiritualistic follies, belief in ghosts, witchcraft, or goblins, his sound religious faith protected him.

is much also in "Beware of Still Water,"—a play in which the two contrasted sisters probably gave a hint for Molière's "École des Maris,"¹ as his M. de Pourceaugnac is a remote relation of its fatuous country-gentleman, Don Torribio. As the head of his family, the father of Clara and Eugenia allows him to choose between his daughters, and when his choice has fallen on the younger, commands her to accept him.

"*Torribio (entering).* How lightly steps a favoured lover forth ! Give you joy, cousin.

Eugenia. The wretch !

Tor. Being selected by the head of your house.

Eug. Sir, one word. I wouldn't marry you if it should cost me my life.

Tor. Ah, you are witty, cousin, I know.

Eug. Not to you, sir. And now especially I mean to tell you sober truth, and abide by it ; so you had better listen. I tell you once again, and once for all, I wouldn't marry you to save my life !

Tor. Cousin ! After what I heard you tell your father ?

Eug. What I said then was out of duty to him, and what I now say is out of detestation of you.

Tor. I'll go and tell him this,—I declare I will.

Eug. Do, and I'll deny it. But I mean it all the same, and swear it.

Tor. Woman, am I not your cousin ?

Eug. Yes.

Tor. And head of the family ?

Eug. I daresay.

Tor. An Hidalgo ?

Eug. Yes.

¹ Molière took more than one hint from Calderon. In "The Loud Secret" of the latter we find the misplaced confidences of his "École des Maris," only made under circumstances of greater probability.

Tor. Gallant ?

Eug. Very.

Tor. And disposed to you ?

Eug. Very possibly.

Tor. What do you mean then ?

Eug. Whatever you choose, so long as you believe I mean what I say. I'll never marry you. You might be all you say, and fifty other things beside ; but I'll never marry any man without a capacity. *(Exit.)*

Tor. Capacity ! Without a Capacity ! I who have the family estate, and my ancestors painted in a row on the patent in my saddle-bags ! I who——

Enter ALONSO.

Alon. Well, nephew, here you are at last. I've been hunting everywhere to tell you the good news.

Tor. And what may that be, pray ?

Alon. That your cousin Eugenia cordially accepts your offer, and——

Tor. Oh indeed, does she so ? I tell you she has a very odd way of doing it then. Oh, uncle, she has said that to me I wouldn't say to my horse.

Alon. To you ?

Tor. Ay, to me—here—on this very spot—just now.

Alon. But what ?

Tor. What ? why, that I had no Capacity ! But I'll soon settle that. I either have a Capacity or not. If I have, she lies ; if I have not, I desire you to buy me one directly, whatever it may cost.

Alon. What infatuation !

Tor. What, it costs so much, does it ? I don't care. I'll not have it thrown in my teeth by her or any woman ; and if you won't I'll go and buy a Capacity, and bring it back with me, let it cost—ay, and weigh—what it will." *(Exit.)*

—(F.)

The other scenes in this diverting play—in which the cautious and reserved Clara takes the dangerous steps

on which the frank and seemingly thoughtless Eugenia would not venture, and in which Don Torribio, hopelessly bewildered by the sight of his cousin's farthingale (which he mistakes for a scaling-ladder), and generally disgusted with life in Madrid, sets off at last on his return to his ancestral mansion, leaving the coast free to a more suitable bridegroom—must be left to the reader's imagination.

CHAPTER IV.

HIS MYTHOLOGICAL PLAYS.

CALDERON, when preparing grand spectacular entertainments for his royal patron, seems frequently to have had recourse to Ovid's 'Metamorphoses' for a subject. Beautiful stories like those of Cupid and Psyche, or Perseus and Andromeda, had an especial attraction for him ; and we find him dramatising these and many more, —sometimes, as in the case of the last-named, as operas, to be sung throughout, but at all times as works to be placed on the stage with every advantage that could be derived from musical accompaniment and from gorgeous scenery. We, therefore, read these plays of his in the closet at a considerable disadvantage ; and a few extracts from three of the seventeen classic fables so used by Calderon must suffice to show how parallel was his handling of them to that of Titian in the sister art of painting.

Take, for instance, the fine scene in "The Statue of Prometheus ;" in which the cold white marble, which represents Minerva, has placed in her hand by her grateful devotee the torch lit by Apollo's rays, which he has stolen to do her honour. Wakened into life by its

touch, the first woman steps forward bewildered by her new consciousness ; “ suddenly tossed,” so she expresses it, “ to a strange shore on the ocean of existence.” The dwellers on the earth do her homage as the goddess of their mountains. To her, the daughter of fire, they hasten to offer the flowers of the earth and the pearls of the water, the foremost singing—

“ With this beauteous garland gay
 Setting on thy brow divine,
 Roses (least of which shall shine
 Like a star with fragrant ray),
 Homage unto thee to pay,
 Now from all her verdant bowers
 Comes the earth with flowers, with flowers.”

While the representative of water responds with—

“ Drops congealed, on ocean born
 Of the white and curdling foam,
 Shining in the face of morn,
 Strung as necklace to adorn,—
 Or to gain new beauty, worn
 On thy throat of purest white,—
 Water pearls brings, pearls of light.”

Or, again, let the reader listen to the snatches of song early on in Calderon’s lovely “ Echo and Narcissus ; ” when remorseless fate has revealed the fair boy Narcissus (jealously hidden by his mother Liriope) to the nymphs who are seeking him through the woodland.

1ST NYMPH.

“ Tell me where Narcissus is,
 Flow’ret and fountain !

2D NYMPH.

Tell me where Narcissus is,
Woodland and mountain !

1ST VOICE.

Love's deceit betrays the heart,
Love's rejection's frank and true ;
This for hurtless smart I knew,
That for hurt which did not smart.

2D VOICE.

Come, death, come ! but hide thee well ;
Come with muffled foot, lest I
Be so very glad to die,
That the joy should make me well.”¹

So foreshadowed, this meeting of Echo with Narcissus bears its well-known fruit of sorrow. Her rejected love bewilders her brain, till she is only able to repeat the last words of each sentence that she hears : while those words, borne on the breeze, strike the ear of Narcissus when he pines for the beautiful face he has seen in the fountain — the naiad (as he thinks) whom no sweet music, no fond entreaty, can move to rise from its cool depths into his arms—with a sentence that dooms him to despair ; and thus the hapless lover and beloved pine away, till of the last is left nothing but the fair Narcissus-flower, of the former nothing but the cave-haunting voice.

In this play, as well as in his “Prometheus,” Calderon lets the warm hues of modern romance suffuse the cold

¹ This quatrain—a great favourite with Calderon—was the composition of Escriva. Further on we shall see him quote a song of Gongora’s, as Shakespeare did the English ballads.

marble of classic art with no unwelcome rosy tint. In his “Circe and Ulysses” (Love the greatest of Enchantments) he goes further; and recalls the most incongruous of mediæval romances by making Circe’s court ladies discuss, with their Greek admirers, the important question, “Which is hardest, to hide or to feign love?” and by a ludicrous scene, in which one of Ulysses’ attendant buffoons who has affronted the enchantress finds, to his horror, a dwarf and a duenna in the box of treasures which she has bestowed upon him; while the other buffoon, who has won her approval, has only to dip his hand into the same chest to extract from it the richest gems. Calderon is, however, not responsible for the whole of this play. Two colleagues aided him in preparing it for a sumptuous Whitsuntide festival, given by Olivarez to his royal master at the palace of the Buen-Retiro. The court viewed the spectacle from boats on the large pond, in the centre of which rose an artificial island, decorated with mother-of-pearl, coral, and rare shells, and surmounted by the gorgeous palace of Circe; the final vanishing of which was a masterpiece of stage effect. The turning-point of the drama is when the armour of the dead Achilles (awarded to Ulysses by the grateful Greeks) is borne in by his anxious followers to rouse their chieftain from his fatal oblivion of duty: a fine use of the legend of the discovery of Achilles himself at Scyros,—so skilfully applied by Tasso to his Rinaldo. The scene will give the reader a good idea alike of Calderon’s strength and weakness in his management of classic subjects. Circe is absent. Ulysses sleeps. Three friends awake him by laying the armour at his feet.

TIMANTHES.

"Mute may it recall the round
Of the battles that he won,
Of the fields he stood upon
With the victor laurel-crowned ;
May it from delusive charms
Wake him soon to manlier deed.

ARCHELAUS.

He who heeds no voicee, may heed
The reproachful rust of arms.

POLYDORUS.

Trophies of a realm subdued,
Trophies, Troy in ashes weeps,
Since along your bright mail creeps
Still the sweat of Trojan blood ;
No base stain of low desire
Let disgraceful love fling o'er you ;
Wake, by thoughts of him who bore you,
Dead Achilles' martial fire.

(*Exeunt.*)

ULYSSES (*waking*).

All too late, forgotten trophy
Of true valour, dost thou come here,¹
Succour 'gainst myself to give me ;
Since though 'gainst myself thy succour
Giv'st thou, in this fane suspended
Must thou here remain, where buried
Shall thy memory be forgotten.

SHADE OF ACHILLES (*from below*).

Mock them not ; do not insult them.

¹ Assonants in *u* and *e*.

ULYSSES.

Ah ! what voice is this that makes me
In my inmost heart to shudder.

(*A tomb arises, and in it is ACHILLES covered with a veil.*)

O dread shape, that in light ashes,
Which not even the wind disturbeth,
Liest in this sepulchre,
Say, who art thou ?

ACHILLES.

That all further
Doubt may end, this black veil lift,
And my countenance discover.

(*ULYSSES raises the veil.*)
Dost thou know me ?

ULYSSES.

If I may
Trust the tests wherewith to judge the
Ashy paleness of thy face,
Which no eye can see untroubled,
And thy stiffened skeleton,
Which, though maimed, retains such lustre,
Thou Achilles art, Achilles.

ACHILLES.

I his spirit am, so bruited,
Who from the Elysian fields, my
Everlasting home and country,
Have passed through the green and azure
Waves of Acheron, thick gummy
Molten mires of fire and brimstone,
Pools of nitre and of sulphur,
To reclaim once more my arms,

So that Love may never judge them
Of his temple the proud spoil,
Idle, all forgot, and useless ;
For the Gods no longer wish
That another lord should rust them,
But that, buried in my tomb,
They should last while years are numbered.
And, oh thou effeminate Greek,
Who, amid the soft indulgence
Of weak love, so many splendours
In thick ebon shades dost cover,—
Not in amorous enchantments
Shouldst thou let them lose their lustre,
But the magic-woven web
Of love’s passionate joys and troubles
Breaking, fly Trinacria, and
Treading the sea’s glass-blue surface,
At the wind’s discretion scud
O’er those level lawns they ruffle ;
For it is the Gods’ decree
That once more your curved prow cuts them,
Till the funeral altars, standing
By my far tomb, thou salutest,
And in it these arms suspendest.”—(M.)

With this play it is interesting to compare Calderon’s *auto* on the same subject, “The Sorceries of Sin,” in which fine moral and spiritual truth is drawn from the tale of Circe. Here the myth becomes an allegory : Ulysses is the type of man sailing across “the waves of this troublesome world,” with Understanding and the Five Senses for his companions ; Sin is the Circe who debases and brutalises them ; Penitence, the heaven-descended Iris who enables man to reclaim his senses from Sin’s power. And this is one example only among many in the Spanish drama of Greek fable put to Christian

uses. As in the Sistine Chapel the Sibyls are intermingled with the Prophets, the pagan with the Jewish heralds of the advent of Christ, so in the *autos* of Calderon we are frequently invited to see Him foreshadowed, not merely by Hebrew type but by Hellenic legend. He, in the *auto* called "Perseus and Andromeda," is the Deliverer come down to free Human Nature from her chain, and to save her from the devouring monster; He is the true Theseus who overcomes the Minotaur, the divine Orpheus who goes down into Hades to fetch back the prey which He has wrested from it; He is "the true God Pan," and, in two *autos* on the subject of Cupid and Psyche, He is set forth to us as the invisible object of His Church's love, lost to her when she prefers sight to faith, but regained by her penitent search. "The manner in which Calderon uses the Greek mythology is exceedingly interesting. He was gifted with an eye singularly open for the true religious element which, however overlaid and debased, is yet to be detected in all inferior forms of religion. These religions were to him the vestibules through which the nations had been guided, till they reached the temple of the absolute religion, where God is worshipped in Christ. . . . He took a manifest delight in finding, or making, a deeper meaning for the legends and tales of the classical world, seeing in them the symbols and unconscious prophecies of Christian truth."¹

Considerations like these make the classic *autos* of

¹ Archbishop Trench.

Calderon more attractive to thoughtful minds than that portion of his secular drama which draws its inspiration from the same source. But alike in each we see the legends of antiquity recast by a fervid imagination, and renewed into a vigorous, if a less graceful, youth than that which was theirs in the spring-time of the world.

CHAPTER V.

HIS SACRED DRAMAS.—“ DEVOTION OF THE CROSS : ”
“ PURGATORY OF ST PATRICK.”

CALDERON’s sacred and legendary dramas fall into several groups. One set (of which only two are generally accessible) are dedicated to the honour of the Virgin ; a second to that of the Cross ; a third depict the introduction of the Faith to barbarous regions ; a fourth (and most interesting) the sufferings of its first confessors. The most sacred subjects are handled in these plays with great, though not irreverent, familiarity ; while in their lighter portions the inevitable lovers interest, and the irrepressible buffoon entertains, the audience, precisely as they do in Calderon’s secular plays. Events so near their author’s time as the conquest of Peru and the career of Ignatius Loyola supply themes for two of them ; while in others the spectator is carried back to the days of the apostles, or to the far earlier period of those twilight glimmerings which preceded the rising of the Sun of Righteousness.

“ Dawn in Copacabana ” is an interesting play in honour of the Virgin ; who appears in it in glory to cast snow on the fires kindled by the enraged Peruvians to destroy Pizarro and his men. Hopeless of human

aid, the Spaniards call on their celestial patroness, and straightway the fires are extinguished. The hero and heroine of the play are Yupanqui, a young Peruvian, and his beloved Guacolda, priestess of the sun, and loved in vain by the last unfortunate Cacique of Peru. The natives, alarmed by the sight of the Spanish ships and by the sound of the Spanish cannon, draw lots for a human victim¹ with which to appease their sun-god. The lot falls on Guacolda; who, abandoned, after a faint struggle, to her fate by her royal lover, bitterly bewails the hardship of having to die for a god who, as she says, would not die for her. Yupanqui risks his life to save hers, and is doomed to perish along with her. But Guacolda flees to a cross set up on the Peruvian coast by adventurous Spanish hands as a token of possession, and already reverenced by the natives, who have seen with fear and wonder the wild beasts crouching before it: she grasps it, and her enemies are unable to drag her from its embrace. Soon after, the victorious advance of Pizarro and his men rescues the two lovers, and enables them to receive baptism in the name of Him who did not refuse to die for His own creatures.

Between these events, which fill the first two acts, and the opening of the third, many years are supposed to have elapsed; for the curtain rises on a Christian country, and on the eve of a great festival, for which Yupanqui is labouring to finish a statue of the holy Virgin. With a mind deeply impressed by that sacred beauty which was revealed to him, when he, in common with many

¹ Here, and elsewhere, Calderon appears to confound the gentle and inoffensive manners of the Peruvians with those of the more cruel Mexicans.

others, saw her appear to rescue Pizarro's army and himself, Yupanqui has been long and diligently striving to frame her likeness as he beheld her then. Toiling night and day at his pious task, he has only failure for his reward ; since, wanting the skill to carry out his good intentions, he finishes his statue indeed, but so badly that it only provokes the beholders to derision. Disappointed, but hopeful still, the Peruvian prays earnestly for help to do better ; and then, as a last resource, expends all his wealth in getting the ill-shapen image gilded. Next morning a religious confraternity are to come and bear it to its place in the Governor's presence, if only it can be found in any sort worthy of the honour designed for it. But Yupanqui's last look at it over night makes his heart sink. In spite of adornment and outlay, he fears the most partial judgment must reject it as ill-favoured. However, mightier artists come to his aid. The Virgin accepts his sincere devotion, and sends down a company of angels, who labour through the night, with holy hymns of joy, to retouch the image of the Madonna and her Child ; so that when morning comes, and the vast crowd have assembled, the malevolent prepared to scoff at Yupanqui's failure and the well-disposed to pity it, and he with a trembling hand lifts up the curtain which hangs before his workshop, all are thrilled with awe, all (and most of all the artist) are filled with unexpected joy ; for there stands in all her glorious beauty "The true Dawn bearing the true Sun," the holy mother embracing her heavenly Infant !

Calderon's plays in honour of the Cross begin early ; for the first of them, "The Sibyl of the East," is founded on the legend (invented in Christian days) concerning

the Queen of Sheba's visit to Solomon. This legend reverses their relative positions, making her rather the bestower than the receiver of the highest wisdom. Strange visions lead the royal lady to quit her own country ; the destined instrument of man's redemption, which is the same tree that caused his fall, is lying uncared for and rejected by the builders of the Temple, when its true nature is revealed to her by a miracle, and, in mystic strains full of oriental hyperbole, she shows it to the amazed king, and celebrates by anticipation the discovery of the True Cross.

Its recovery in after ages is the theme of another play, "*The Exaltation of the Cross*." Here the priceless relic has fallen into the hands of Cosrhoe, King of Persia. The Christian emperor, Heraclius, marches with an army to regain it. He is defeated and surrounded by his enemy's forces. Then Cosrhoe offers life and liberty to him and to his troops, on condition of their apostatising from the faith. The proposition is rejected with noble scorn ; and the emperor and his men betake themselves to prayer. It is answered ; for when they prepare to sell their lives as dear as they can in battle, their defeat is turned to victory. They recover the Cross from its heathen possessors, and Heraclius returns in triumph to place the wood which all Christendom reveres in the basilica of Constantine and of Helena at Jerusalem.

The profound reverence for the visible Cross which is the basis of these two plays is, alas ! well known to have been compatible in many Christians, in many ages, with the profoundest disregard for all that the Cross signifies,—except bare immunity from punishment. Such a disregard is unfortunately the marked characteristic of the

superstitious popular legend, dramatised by Calderon in his “Devotion of the Cross”—a story of which the apparent teaching is, that the most wicked life, if combined with a certain number of outward mechanical acts of piety, will not exclude the sinner from everlasting bliss. Certainly when, at its end, the robber Eusebio dies the death of the righteous after all his frightful crimes, men may well ask whether its writer ever weighed the inspired declaration that the Cross was erected that men, “being dead unto sin, should live unto righteousness;” and exclaim with Coleridge against the antinomianism of the Romanist. Perhaps, on further consideration, some may be inclined to pronounce a more favourable judgment,—to hope that the author only meant to teach us how a lingering spark of good may smoulder on in the worst breast, to burst at length into flame at the touch of divine grace; how while there is life there is hope even for the most evil; how it is literally never too late to mend,—even if for that amendment, so far as man’s eye can reach, but a momentary space is left. It is a question not to be decided here. The following is an outline of the play which raises it.

Lisardo has defied Eusebio to single combat on account of his persevering pursuit of his sister Julia. To show his adversary that he is not worthy of contempt, Eusebio gives a brief history of himself. His infant cries were first heard at the foot of a stone cross, where he was found lying abandoned, with the figure of a cross mysteriously, and indelibly, imprinted on his breast. The owner of the village near which he was found adopted him, and left him his name and riches. The Cross has since shielded him from innumerable perils; its sign

having guarded him from fire and sword, and preserved him from bandits, in shipwreck and from lightning. Thus distinguished by heaven, Eusebio bitterly resents Lisardo's insults, and ends his speech by an unmeasured defiance. The conflict which follows it is short. Lisardo falls, and entreats his adversary not to let him die unconfessed. Eusebio, conjured by the Cross on which Christ suffered, sheathes his weapon and carries the dying man to a neighbouring hermitage; receiving in return Lisardo's promise to pray for him so soon as he shall be admitted to heaven, that he too, when his time comes, may not have to depart unshriven.

Then the scene changes to the house of Cureio, Julia's father. Eusebio enters, and has the audacity to try to persuade Julia to flee with him, before she can hear that her brother has met with his death at his hands. The principal argument by which he urges her to take this step is, that it will be too late to-morrow, as her father intends then to force her to take the veil. Julia is about to consent to flight when that father's step is heard outside. Eusebio hastily conceals himself; and Cureio enters with unctuous congratulations to his daughter on the holy state which she is to embrace next morning at his bidding,—speeches worthy of Gertrude's father in the ‘Promessi Sposi.’ All, he tells her, has been arranged for her reception into the convent. The poor girl declines to be thus disposed of without her own consent. “My will should be your law, whether for right or for wrong,” says the unreasonable Cureio. “Let me have a little time to consider,” pleads Julia, “before determining my condition for life.” “I have considered for you,” replies her father, “and given the assent in your name;” and,

seeing her still resisting, he bids her not provoke him to slay her, and adds, "My old suspicions of thy mother must be true. I thought that I accused her falsely whom all our town took for a saint, and I felt remorse. But I seem to have been right after all." He goes on to tell his daughter with some prolixity how, shortly before her birth, maddened by his unreasonable suspicions, he led his wife, Rosmira, from the town to a lonely spot among the mountains. There . . . But at this point his narrative is interrupted by Julia's maid, who comes, pale and tearful, to announce the death of her young master; and to the horror of the father and the sister,—to the perhaps even greater terror of the concealed Eusebio,—Lisardo's body is carried in by the peasants who witnessed his death, and who declare the name of his slayer. Curcio turns to his unhappy daughter with these cruel words :—

"Excuse him, prithee, thou his would-be wife ;
Say the chaste eagerness with which he wooed
Caused the slight error that produced this strife.
He wanted ink,—and so he wrote in blood !

JULIA.

Sir !

CURCIO.

Answer me no more. For thy new life
Prepare this very day with altered mood ;
Or else prepare thy beauty for its doom,
To share my poor Lisardo's early tomb."—(M.)

Having said this, he leaves her alone (as he thinks) with her brother's corpse.

Then begins a terrible scene. The wretched Julia,

standing between the body of her dead brother and his living murderer, feels that the blood she sees flowing has placed an impassable barrier between herself and the man whom she still cannot help loving. She cries wildly, "Regardless of all other considerations but love, I was about to give thee my hand, and thou offerest to clasp it with one dyed in my brother's blood!" Eusebio bids Julia kill him to avenge her brother; and threatens to stay there and surrender himself to her angry father. "Grant me the last request I shall ever make to thee," is her reply. He promises that he will; and she bids him save his own life. "I had better lose it now," is his moody answer; "since, if I live, no convent walls will be high enough to preserve thee from me." "I shall know how to defend myself," rejoins Julia, "only do thou keep safe." "May I not see thee once more?" asks the unhappy lover. "Never," is the reply. "Dost thou hate me, then?" "I must strive to do so." "Wilt thou forget me?" "I know not if I can." Encouraged by this reply, Eusebio repeats his former question.

"Shall I see thee once more?

JULIA.

Never.

EUSEBIO.

What then of our fond love past?

JULIA.

What then of this red blood present?"—(M.)

A sound is heard: men are coming to remove Lisardo's body. Eusebio at last consents to depart, and the scene closes, and with it the first Act.

When the second Act begins, we find Eusebio the captain of a troop of banditti. Men would not believe that he slew Lisardo in fair combat. His property has been confiscated, and he himself pursued as a murderer. He has therefore given himself over to a wholly lawless life, robbing and murdering in all directions; but is still in his own way devout, as he shows by carefully putting a cross on the grave of each of his victims. To the number of these he comes very near to adding the pious Alberto, Bishop of Trent,¹ shot at by him on his way to Rome. The bullet is, however, found flattened against a book carried by the venerable traveller on his breast; and its bearer and author is, though alarmed, uninjured. Eusebio asks the subject of it, learns that it is "The Miracles of the Cross," sets Alberto free, and asks him in return to pray that he may not die unconfessed. This the old man readily engages to do; and, disclosing his name, pledges his word to his preserver that he will come and confess him whenever he shall summon him to do so.

Eusebio's next exploit is an attempt to carry Julia off from her convent. This attempt horrifies the audience; for they, meantime, have heard the end of Curcio's story. He narrates it in the wild mountain gorge in which he is seeking his son's murderer, at the foot of the very cross where his wife nearly fell a victim to his unjust suspicions;—where he left her for dead, and whence she returned (miraculously preserved alive) with a lovely new-born girl in her arms, with a red cross printed on its bosom,—its twin brother being lost, and all after-

¹ Although the strong local colouring of the piece is entirely Spanish, the scene of the "Devotion of the Cross" is laid in Italy, in the neighbourhood of Siena.

search for him having been in vain. Thus the spectators view Eusebio's foot on the brink of a frightful abyss; since the slain Lisardo is manifestly his brother,—the nun whom he designs to tear from her cloister evidently his own sister. With fear they see him inside her cell, and hearken to her consent to break her solemn vows and fly with him,—when lo! an unseen hand holds back the youth from falling into the awful gulf which is yawning to devour him; a glimpse of the cross on the maiden's breast changes Eusebio's mind, and he flees as from a devouring fire, saying, “I adore thee more than ever, but I cannot dishonour the Cross.” The same reverence makes him entreat Julia to return to her convent; when, irresistibly impelled to her destruction, she rushes to seek him out in his mountain-haunts. It is at this point of the robber's course that Cureio and his avenging band come up with him. Mortally wounded by other hands in a desperate encounter (in which a secret prompting has led the unknown son to spare his father, and that father to wish rather to take prisoner, than to slay, his youthful adversary), Eusebio staggers to the foot of the self-same cross which witnessed his birth, and which now calls him to the exercise of contrite faith. He knows, he says, that from men he can expect no mercy—

“ But this cross, athwart my way,
Rising up in silence, saith,—
They, indeed, can give thee death,
I, the life that lasts alway.—(M.)
Tree which heaven has willed to dower
With that true fruit whence we live,
As that other death did give ;

Of new Eden loveliest flower ;
 Bow of light, that in worst hour
 Of the worst flood signal true,
 O'er the world of mercy threw ;
 Fair plant yielding sweetest wine ;
 Of our David harp divine ;
 Of our Moses tables new ;
 Sinner am I, therefore I
 Claim upon thy mercies make,
 Since alone for sinners' sake
 God on thee endured to die ;
 And for me would God have died
 Had there been no world beside.—(D.)

I first robber shall not be,
 Who on thee confessed to God ;
 Since we two the same path trod,
 And repent—deny not me,
 The redemption wrought on thee.”—(M.)

Death is coming on apace when Curcio draws near, offers to stanch the wound, and, laying bare the print on Eusebio's breast, recognises in him his long-lost son, and exclaims—

“ In the place where I stand o'er thee,
 Where I sinned 'gainst her who bore thee,
 Smites me God's just hand severe.”—(M.)

Very touching is the dying youth's reply :—

EUSEBIO.

“ I can speak no more ; adieu,
 O my father ! for on me
 Falls the fatal veil, and death,
 In its swift flight passing by me,
 Life to know thee doth deny me ;
 Time to live thy rule beneath,
 And to answer thee e'en breath.”—(M.)

Even as he says, so it is. After crying once and again on Alberto to come and hear his last confession, and receiving no response, Eusebio expires. Curcio rends his grey hair in bitter anguish, but he cannot stay to weep over the dead body. He is summoned to repel a fresh attack of the bandits, who advance under a new leader,—no other than Julia in man's apparel,—when lo! a miracle. Alberto, returning from Rome, is advancing up the rugged road, when a feeble voice calls him by name. It is the cry of Eusebio; reanimated to give him time for his last shrift. The pious bishop adores this signal token of the divine mercy; and shows no fear as the dead man rises from his lonely couch and pours into his ears the recital of his fearful crimes. But he offers on his behalf to heaven all his own penances, and is seen afar by the amazed bandits and their assailants (on whom the strange sight imposes a truce) with uplifted hand giving absolution to Eusebio; who has no sooner received it than he falls once more on the ground dead. "Such is the power of devotion to the Cross," says the pious elder to Curcio; who proclaims his son happy in his death, only wishing that his daughter might, in like manner be brought to repentance. "She is here," exclaims Julia, distracted by her discovery of her relationship to Eusebio; and horror-stricken at the remembrance of the crimes committed by her to accomplish the union which heaven so mercifully prevented. Curcio draws his sword that he may cleanse the honour of his house in his daughter's blood. But the cross, which Julia now clasps, saves her as it had saved Eusebio. Her solemn vow of penitence is heard; and it rises with her into the air, doubtless to restore her to her forsaken convent cell.

This striking play, which may here and there remind us of Schiller's "Robbers" (to which, however, it is immeasurably superior), was, like it, a youthful production. As such, it need not surprise us to find it, in parts, immature. Its notes of time are somewhat confused; and the wickedness of its leading characters is increased beyond necessity, and, in Julia's case, beyond all probability—unless, indeed, we may dismiss the ghastly catalogue of her murders as the fabrication of her own overwrought brain. But, whatever its faults, "The Devotion of the Cross" must be classed among the greatest fate-dramas of modern times. Eusebio is born, like Oedipus, under a curse; but from the worst doom of the wretched Theban king the cross which guarded him in infancy saves him in manhood. He does not slay his father; his unknown sister remains sacred to him.¹ The shadow of the great Christian symbol of reconciliation finally avails in his case to cut off "the descending and entailed curse," which is the consequence of his father's crime. But the doom which, in this life, overtakes him, is even yet a heavy one; and when the guilty Curcio, standing on the scene of his own early crime, discovers a son in the dying robber, "the wheel has come full circle," and a recognition, awful as those which thrill the spectators of Greek tragedy,

¹ M. Philarète Chasle says, very justly: "On devine sans peine que Julie est la sœur d'Eusèbe; et cette invention dramatique augmentant d'intensité irait couoyer l'horrible et l'insoutenable, si Calderon n'était donné de ce vrai génie dont l'essence est pure. Nous allons le voir, dans une occasion si difficile, retrouver la moralité qui lui est propre, la sublime pudeur qui ne l'abandonne jamais. Ses ailes blanches et vierges trempent dans l'orage sans se flétrir, et effleurent la foudre sans se brûler."

moves the beholder alike with terror and with pity. Then, last of all, comes the wonderful after-climax ; when, athwart the blackness of the ravine, with its high-piled rocks and gloomy pines, dark and weird as a landscape by Salvator Rosa, there darts a sudden ray of light as from a setting sun, lighting up, with an unexpected glory, the cross which guards and consecrates the valley, and stands a sentinel over the shrift of the dead.

“The Purgatory of St Patrick” is another of Calderon’s striking religious plays. In its first two Acts is represented the conversion of Ireland ; in its last that of a notorious sinner. The former is effected by St Patrick’s preaching ; the latter by his prayers after he has departed this life. Montalvan had told the story ; and had antedated the adventures of a “miles quidam Oenus nomine qui multis annis sub rege Stephano militaverat,” according to Matthew Paris, in order to bring the eye-witness of “St Patrick’s Purgatory” into the same canvas as that on which he had depicted its first discovery. Calderon dramatised the legend, and found for his play a true centre of unity in the great personality of the Irish apostle. He and Enius are wrecked together on the island—received the one with contempt, the other with honour, by its savage monarch ; and, three years later, incur each his fiercest displeasure : the wicked Enius by eloping with, and murdering, the king’s daughter, Polonia ; the holy Patrick, by converting his subjects to the faith of Christ. Even the miraculous restoration to life of the slain Polonia, by the prayers of the saint, has but a slight effect on her obdurate father. He insists on seeing either heaven, hell, or at least purgatory, with his own eyes, if he is to believe in the existence of any of

them. The saint, threatened by him with death unless this unreasonable demand is complied with, prays fervently, and gets, in answer to his request, a door opened into the nether world. A dark cave by a neighbouring lake is made, from henceforth, the portal which whosoever enters in a state of grace shall see untold wonders ; while it shall consign the impenitent sinner who ventures within to sudden destruction. Polonia (seeking a hermitage in which befittingly to spend her restored life) is startled by the awful sounds which strike her ear at its entrance ; and points it out to the rest in words whose graphic force have supplied Shelley with a fine image in his “Cenci :”—

“ See ye not here this rock some power secureth,
That grasps with awful toil the hillside brown,
And, with the very anguish it endureth
Age after age, seems slowly coming down ?
Suspended there with effort, it obscureth
A mighty cave beneath, which it doth crown ;—
An open mouth the horrid cavern shapes,
Wherewith the melancholy mountain gapes.”—(M.)

Into this cavern, despite of Patrick’s warnings, the unbelieving king rushes,—to perish in its awful recesses. Into this same cavern goes Enius, penitent at last for all his fearful crimes ;—but this takes place some years later. There is a considerable interval of time between the second and third Acts, and the latter begins with the conversion of Enius. He has returned to Ireland to slay an enemy of his there ; and night after night has found his way barred by a mysterious figure muffled in a cloak. He prepares to fight with him rather than have his purpose any longer baffled. But, while he does so,

a chill runs through his veins ; and when the unknown form stands once more beside him, calls him by his name, and, heedless of his challenge, abides his stroke, Enius sees with horror that his sword merely cuts the air, and requires all his long-practised courage to enable him to follow the mysterious stranger. But he does follow him, nevertheless, and comes up with him in a lonely street ; where, getting no answer to his demand of the unknown person's name, he flings himself upon him and tears off by force the cloak that shrouds him. It discloses to him a skeleton. "I, alas ! am Enius," says the awful spectre. "How is it that thou dost not know thine own self ?"

Sobered by this dread revelation of his own future state, Enius flees to seek Patrick (who once saved his life, and whom he then promised to meet once more) in the depths of the mysterious cavern ; at the end of which lies Paradise, now the saint's joyful abode. On his way he encounters the hermit princess, Polonia,—the ghost (so it seems to his aroused conscience) of his worst crime, risen up to bar the way to mercy. Her introduction, as she rises in the holy calm of her morning orisons before the sin-stricken Enius, affects the spectator's mind with a soothing influence. He has climbed with Enius up from the abyss of crime, like Dante from that of hell ; before the one, as the other, glow the purgatorial fires.¹ The green mount with its overshadowing trees, on which kneels the royal lady beside her quiet lake, refreshes his soul somewhat as did the sapphire sea, and flower-enamelled turf at the foot of the purgatorial mountain, the eyes of Dante.

¹ The tale of Oenus is one out of many of the mediæval precursors of the Divine Comedy.

POLONIA.

" To Thee, O Lord, my spirit climbs,
 To Thee from every lonely hill
 I burn to sacrifice my will
 A thousand and a thousand times.
 And, such my boundless love to Thee,
 I wish each will of mine a living soul could be.

Far better on some natural lawn
 To see the morn its gems bestrew,
 Or watch it weeping pearls of dew
 Within the white arms of the dawn ;
 Or view, before the sun the stars
 Drive o'er the brightening plain their swiftly-fading cars,

Far better in the mighty main,
 As night comes on and clouds grow grey,
 To see the golden coach of day
 Drive down amid the waves of Spain
 (But, be it dark or be it bright,
 O Lord ! I praise Thy name by day and night),

Than to endure the inner strife,
 The specious glare, but real weight,
 Of pomp and power, and pride and state,
 And all the vanities of life."—(M.)

Enius asks the way to the cavern : Polonia knows him again, but subdues all thoughts of revenge, and gives him the direction he needs. The penitent prays to be preserved from despair at the sight of his greatest sin ; and is comforted, as he enters the bark which is to bear him across the lake, by the assurance that his victim yet lives, and that she pardons him.

The closing scene exhibits Polonia, her sister the Queen of Ireland, and their attendants, awaiting, with

the recluse guardians of the cave, the reappearance of Enius. The door is thrown open ; the question is, Will the soldier emerge from it to the light of day, or prove to have perished like so many of his precursors ? After a brief interval he sets the doubt at rest, and comes forth, pale but collected, to disclose, at the Prior's command, the secrets of the everlasting prison-house. His is a tale awful like that which Socrates says he heard from the lips of Er the son of Armenius. On his first entrance he heard a sound as of thunder, and seemed to sink into the very centre of the earth. There he passed through a jasper hall, where twelve white-robed elders admonished him to give no credence to the fiends that would shortly beset him ; and straightway afterwards he found himself among the demon crew. These told him that his salvation was impossible, and bade him, with seeming kindness, not seek to be tormented before his time, but return to enjoy earthly pleasure while he could. Knowing well that to do so would insure his ruin, he refused with firmness. The devils thereupon seized him and carried him from torment to torment. Plunged into flames, whirled through regions of eternal ice, set amid fiery vipers and torrents of burning pitch, and cast into a volcano whose sparks were tortured spirits, the courage of Enius failed not : each time he called on the name of Christ, and each time he was released. Then came the last trial. And here the narrative, hitherto true to those of Dante's Scandinavian and Teutonic precursors, appears to desert them for Eastern legend. For Enius says that, at length, he stood before a fiery river, which could only be crossed by a bridge one single line in width. The wretches

who fell from it were rent and devoured by hydras and monsters in the sulphurous stream below. Once more the shuddering Enius called aloud on Christ. Once more strength was given him, and he passed the perilous bridge in safety. And now his dangers were over. Noble trees of Paradise waved their scented boughs above his head, fair flowers fed by innumerable fountains blossomed beneath his feet; while amid the branches the birds sang sweetly. As he advanced along the woodland glades, he saw, beauteous and stately, the golden city gleaming, with its jewelled gateways, out of which poured forth saints in long procession to greet the new citizen. Last of all, and of all most resplendent, stepped forward, amid choirs of angels, "the great patriarch, Patrick," to congratulate his old acquaintance on having at length kept tryst with him; and to dismiss him back to earth (for the present) with a friendly embrace,—since he, too, must die ere he can enter the city of the saints.

CHAPTER VI.

HIS SACRED DRAMAS.—THE MARTYR PLAYS.

NOWHERE is Calderon more successful than in the mine (left unwrought by so many dramatists) of Christian martyrology. The most celebrated of his plays so originated is “The Wonder-working Magician,”—a play from which Goethe derived several hints for his “Faust.” Its scene is laid at Antioch; in the pleasant groves near which famous city the studious pagan philosopher, Cyprian, is discovered poring over Pliny’s definition of the divine nature. To him enters the demon, disguised as a travelling student; with the malicious intention of hindering his researches after truth. “What sciences do you know?” asks Cyprian. “Many,” is the answer.

CYPRIAN.

“Alas!

Much pains must we expend on one alone,
And even then attain it not.

DEMON.

. . . In the country whence I come, sciences
Require no learning, they are known.

CYPRIAN.

Oh, would
I were of that bright country, for in this
The more we study, we the more discover
Our ignorance.

DEMON.

It is so true, that I
Had so much arrogance as to oppose
The chair of the most high professorship,
And obtained many votes, and though I lost,
The attempt was still more glorious than the failure
Could be dishonourable."—(S.)

Notwithstanding these boasts, the demon has to own himself worsted in the disputation which follows, Cyprian's demonstration of the unity of the Godhead being too clear for him to impugn ; and he departs to seek a different weapon against him in the singular beauty of Justina, a Christian maiden in Antioch. Her charms are first brought before Cyprian by a proposed duel for them between Lelius (son of the Governor of Antioch) and his friend Florus, which he prevents ; and, having persuaded the rivals to refer their dispute to the lady herself by each asking her in marriage of her father, visits her to lay their claims before her, and falls in love with her himself. Justina rejects all three, and is, in her turn, renounced by both her former lovers, who are made, by a wicked stratagem of the demon, each to think himself despised for a rival's sake.

The second Act shows us Cyprian maddened by his desperate passion. Vainly has he flung aside the sober garb of a philosopher to clothe himself in a courtier dress. Vainly has he pressed his suit on Justina. Her words—

"Fate forbids that I should love thee,
Cyprian, except in death"—(M.)

drive him forth from the city, and we overhear him bemoaning himself by the sad sea waves thus :—

"O memory ! permit it not
That the tyrant of my thought
Be another soul, that still
Holds dominion o'er the will ;
That would refuse (but can no more)
To bend, to tremble, and adore.
Vain idolatry !—I saw,
And gazing, became blind with error,
Weak ambition, which the awe
Of her presence bound to terror !
So beautiful she was, and I,
Between my love and jealousy,
And so convulsed with hope and fear,
Unworthy as it may appear,
So bitter is the life I live,
That, hear me hell, I now would give
To thy most detested spirit
My soul, for ever to inherit—
To suffer punishment, and pine,
So this woman may be mine.
Hear'st thou, hell ! dost thou reject it ?
My soul is offered !

DEMON (*unseen*).

I accept it.

(*Tempest with thunder and lightning.*)

CYPRIAN.

What is this ? Ye heavens, for ever pure,
At once intensely radiant and obscure !

Athwart the ethereal halls
The lightnings' arrow and the thunder-balls

The days affright,
 As from the horizon round,
 Burst with earthquake sound,
 In mighty torrents the electric fountains :
 Clouds quench the sun, and thunder-smoke
 Strangles the air, and fire eclipses heaven.
 Philosophy, thou canst not even
 Compel their causes underneath thy yoke.
 From yonder clouds, even to the waves below,
 The fragments of a single ruin choke
 Imagination's flight ;
 For on flakes of surge, like feathers light,
 The ashes of the desolation cast
 Upon the gloomy blast,
 Tell of the footsteps of the storm ;
 And nearer, see the melancholy form
 Of a great ship, the outcast of the sea,
 Drives miserably.”—(S.)

From this seeming ship, cast away in Cyprian's sight,
 the demon floats to land on a plank. Hospitably received, the wrecked voyager unfolds a marvellous tale
 of his own former greatness and fallen fortunes :—

“ In myself I am
 A world of happiness and misery.
 This I have lost, and that I must lament
 For ever. In my attributes I stood
 So high and so heroically great,
 In lineage so supreme, and with a genius
 Which penetrated with a glance the world
 Beneath my feet, that, won by my high merit,
 A king, whom I may call the King of kings,

 In his high palace, roofed with brightest gems
 Of living light—call them the stars of heaven—
 Named me his counsellor. But the high praise

Stung me with pride and envy, and I rose
In mighty competition to ascend
His seat, and place my foot triumphantly
Upon his subject thrones. Chastised, I know
The depth to which ambition falls.”—(S.)

But still he is mighty enough, he says, to give effect to Cyprian's wildest wishes. The bait is taken. Cyprian discloses to him, after a while, his love for Justina. The demon laughs incredulously when he hears that a woman is the cause of such deep dejection. “Let me describe her to you,” says Cyprian:—

“The fair cradle of the skies,
Where the infant sun reposeth
Ere he rises, decked with roses
Robed in snow, to dry heaven's eyes ;
The green prison-bud that tries
To restrain the conscious rose,
When the crimson captive knows
April treads its garden near,
Turning dawn's half-frozen tear
To a smile where sunshine glows ;
The sweet streamlet gliding by,
Though it scarcely dares to breathe
Softest murmurs through its teeth,
From the frosts that on it lie ;
The bright pink, in its small sky
Shining like a coral star ;
The blithe bird that flies afar,
Dressed in shifting shades and blooms,—
Soaring eitherne of gay plumes,
Harping high o'er heaven's blue bar ;
The white rock that cheats the sun
When it tries to melt it down,
For it can but melt the crown
Which from winter's snow it won ;

The green bay that will not shun,
 Though the heavens are all aglow,
 For its feet a bath of snow,—
 Green Narcissus of the brook,
 Fearless leaning o'er to look,
 Though the stream runs chill below :
 In a word, the crimson dawn,
 Sun, mead, streamlet, rosebud, May,
 Bird that sings his amorous lay,
 April's laugh that gems the lawn,
 Pink that sips the dews up-drawn,
 Rock that stands in storm and shine,
 Bay-tree that delights to twine
 Round its fadeless leaves the sun,
 All are parts which, met in one,
 Form this woman most divine.”—(M.)

To win her, he says he would give his soul. Cyprian learns that a year's study of magic arts will be needed before he can have sufficient skill in them to make her his own. Infatuated by love, he signs the fatal bond with his blood which makes his soul over to his teacher, and departs with him to receive the requisite instruction in a lonely cavern.

When the year has expired, Cyprian comes forth an adept in the unholy arts which he has been studying, with spells that can raise ghosts ; but which, as he is to learn presently, cannot force (however powerfully they may incline) human free-will. He begins to use them in order to draw Justina to his side—the Demon powerfully seconding them.

DEMON.

“Abyss of Hell ! I call on thee,
 Thou wild misrule of thine own anarchy !
 From thy prison-house set free

The spirits of voluptuous death,
 That with their mighty breath
 They may destroy a world of virgin thoughts ;
 Let her chaste mind with fancies thick as motes
 Be peopled from the shadowy deep,
 Till her guileless phantasy
 Full to overflowing be !
 And with sweetest harmony,
 Let birds, and flowers, and leaves, and all things move
 To love—only to love.
 Let nothing meet her eyes
 But signs of Love's soft victories ;
 Let nothing meet her ears
 But sounds of Love's sweet sorrow ;
 So that from faith no succour may she borrow,
 But, guided by my spirit blind,
 And in a magic snare entwined,
 She may now seek Cyprian.
 Begin, while I in silence bind
 My voice when thy sweet song thou hast begun.

A Voice within.

What is the glory far above
 All else in human life ?

ALL.

Love ! Love !

(*The DEMON goes out. Enter JUSTINA.*)

FIRST VOICE.

There is no form on which the fire
 Of love its traces has impressed not.
 Man lives far more in love's desire
 Than by life's breath, soon possessed not.
 If all that lives must love or die,
 All shapes on earth, or sea, or sky,
 With one consent to heaven cry
 That the glory far above
 All else in life is—

ALL.

Love ! O love !

JUSTINA (*alarmed and disturbed*).

Thou melancholy thought, which art
So fluttering and so sweet, to thee
When did I give the liberty
Thus to afflict my heart ?
What is the cause of this new power,
Which doth my fevered being move,
Momently raging more and more ?
What subtle pain is kindled now
Which from my heart doth overflow
Into my senses ?—

ALL.

Love ! O love !

JUSTINA (*more composed*).

'Tis that enamoured nightingale
Who gives me the reply ;
He ever tells the same soft tale
Of passion and of constancy
To his mate, who, rapt and fond,
Listening sits a bough beyond.

Be silent, nightingale !—No more
Make me think, in hearing thee
Thus tenderly thy love deplore,
If a bird can feel his so,
What a man would feel for me.
And, voluptuous vine, O thou
Who seekest most when least pursuing,
Who the trunk thou interlacest
Deck'st with verdure, yet embracest
With a weight which is its ruin,—
No more, with green embraces, vine,

Make me think on what thou lovest,—
 For, whilst thus thy boughs entwine,
 I fear lest thou shouldst teach me, sophist,
 How arms might be entangled too.

Light-enchanted sunflower, thou
 Who gazest ever true and tender
 On the sun's revolving splendour,
 Follow not his faithless glance
 With thy faded countenance ;
 Nor teach my beating heart to fear,
 If leaves can mourn without a tear,
 How eyes must weep ! O nightingale,
 Cease from thy enamoured tale,—
 Leafy vine, unwreath thy bower,
 Restless sunflower, cease to move,—
 Or tell me all what poisonous power
 Ye use against me ?

ALL.

Love ! love ! love !

JUSTINA.

It cannot be ! Whom have I ever loved ?
 Trophies of my oblivion and disdain,
 Florus and Lelius did I not reject ?
 And Cyprian ?—

(She becomes troubled at his name.)

Enter DEMON (who says)—

Follow, and I will lead thee where he is.

JUSTINA.

And who art thou, who hast found entrance hither
 Into my chamber, through the doors and locks ?
 Art thou a monstrous shadow which my madness
 Has formed in the idle air ?

DEMON.

No ; I am one
 Called by the thought which tyrannises thee
 From his eternal dwelling ; who this day
 Is pledged to bear thee unto Cyprian.

JUSTINA.

So shall thy promise fail. This agony
 Of passion which afflicts my heart and soul
 May sweep imagination in its storm ;
 The will is firm.

Thought is not in my power, but action is.
 I will not move my foot to follow thee.

DEMON.

I

Must force thy will.

JUSTINA.

It is invincible ;
 It were not free if thou hadst power upon it.

(He draws, but cannot move her.)

My defence
 Consists in God.

DEMON.

Woman, thou hast subdued me
 Only by not owning thyself subdued.
 But since thou thus findest defence in God,
 I will assume a feigned form, and thus
 Make thee a victim of my baffled rage.
 For I will mask a spirit in thy form
 Who will betray thy name to infamy.”—(S.)

The Demon carries out this plan ; and a phantom-figure of Justina appears at last, in answer to Cyprian's

repeated incantations. But a stronger Hand interposes to defend Justina's fair fame, and to save Cyprian's soul. As in the "Purgatory of St Patrick," the cloak which shrouds the apparition reveals a hideous skeleton. "Such, Cyprian, are all the glories of this world," says the phantom, and vanishes from his sight. The Demon offers Cyprian other means for attaining his end. "I do not ask them," is the answer; "I only want to have the bond, which I gave you, returned me, since you have not performed your contract." The Demon argues that he made good his promise: only a portent defeated its fulfilment. "Worked by whom?" asks Cyprian; and, turning his master's teaching against himself, he constrains him by his magic science to give a true answer. Step by step he wrings from him the admission that a god guards Justina; and that God, Almighty, Omniscient, All-Holy,—the God of the Christians. "But thou," concludes the Evil One, "wilt now invoke Him in vain. I hold thy bond signed with thine own blood. Know me at length: I am the Devil, and thou art my slave for ever." Hoping against hope that He who rescued the guiltless Justina may likewise deliver him, on his repentance, guilty though he be, Cyprian calls on God, tears himself from the Demon's grasp, and departs to seek baptism—fortified by which holy sacrament he boldly presents himself before the Governor of Antioch, avows himself a Christian and a candidate for martyrdom, and then falls senseless on the ground. At this moment another prisoner is brought in. It is Justina, found praying in a Christian Church, and obnoxious to the Governor as the object of his son Lelius's passion, which had led the youth into danger and imprisonment. The

Governor leaves his two captives alone for a few moments while he considers their sentence. They may yet save their lives by a recantation; as, should Cyprian then espouse Justina and go with her into banishment, the father's fears for Lelius might cease.

Recovering from his swoon, Cyprian exclaims to Justina, who seems to him a second phantom come to trouble his new resolve: "I invoked thee not; why here?" The maiden explains to him that she is a prisoner for confessing Christ. "He has watched well in thy defence," says Cyprian; "get Him to listen to my prayers. . . . But can He; for I sold my soul to the Demon for thy beauty?"

"JUSTINA.

Oh, there are not
 Stars as many in the heavens,¹
 Sands as many on the shore,
 Sparks within the fire as many,
 Motes as many in the beam,
 On the winds so many feathers,
 As the sins He can forgive.

CYPRIAN.

I believe it, and am ready
 Now a thousand lives to give Him,

.

A SERVANT (*entering*).

The Lord Governor, Aurelius,
 Summons Cyprian to his presence,
 And Justina.

¹ Assonants in *e*, *e*.

JUSTINA (*to CYPRIAN*).

I once said that I could love thee
 But in death, and since together,
 Cyprian, we now must die,
 What I promised I present thee." (*Exeunt.*)
 —(M.)

While the two martyrs are being beheaded a sound as of a great tempest is heard ; and then the scene opens to disclose their bodies lying together on a scaffold, while the Demon (sorely against his will) appears to testify to Justina's perfect innocence, and to own that he has no power now to keep Cyprian back from heaven ; since his signature to the fatal bond has been washed off by his blood.

A good French critic (M. de Latour) has observed on this Faust Christianised that, whereas Goethe's masterpiece leaves for its final effect a sense of bitterness and desolation in the soul, the very martyrdom of Cyprian and of Justina leaves us for a legacy something of their sweet and serene tranquillity. The Christian virgin's resistance of the powerful spells of love is a scene of unrivalled beauty, which derives fresh interest from Justina's veiled affection for Cyprian—so carefully hidden even from herself, that it is never owned till the hour when she can, without blame,

"The thing denied to Life, on Death bestow."

And the Evil One seems in his dialogue with Cyprian, by his concealed anguish, by his backward glances to that high estate whence he fell, "not less than archangel ruined"—however much the deterioration wrought by that fall on his mighty intellect may appear in its fruitless devices and its short-sighted wisdom.

These are yet more apparent in another of Calderon's martyr-plays, "The Joseph of Women;" which, although not to be ranked, as "The Wonder-working Magician" has been by some editors, among the philosophic dramas at the head of which stands Goethe's "Faust," yet possesses remarkable beauties. Its heroine is Eugenia, the wise and beautiful daughter of the Governor of Alexandria—in which city, while yet a worshipper of idols, she reads lectures like another Hypatia, and collects around her a polite and learned society who engage in poetic and witty contests. The charms of a rival fair one, Melancia, are cast into the shade by Eugenia's; and Cesarinus, son of the Emperor of Rome himself, is at her feet. A duel, fought by him with Aurelius, another of Eugenia's suitors, has strange results. Into the dead body of the latter, who is slain by Cesarinus, the Demon, who prowls round Eugenia to hinder her conversion, enters; and, when she flees to the Thebaïd desert to seek the instruction of the hermit Helenus, the false Aurelius pursues her there. By a master-stroke of policy, he persuades her father and her lover, who have come to look for her, that the gods have snatched Eugenia from the earth and given her a throne on Olympus. And then, in execution of a commission intrusted to him against the Christians, he captures Eugenia, in the monk's dress, which she, Marina-like, has assumed, along with the aged Helenus; and has the pleasure of presenting her as a slave to her rival Melancia at the very moment when Alexandria is ringing with the name, and rejoicing at the dedication of the statue, of the new goddess Eugenia. Not a word escapes the Christian maiden's lips which could disclose either her sex or her name.

She suffers on in silence ; even the hateful love which the lawless Melancia proffers to the handsome youth which Eugenia seems, wrings not from her her secret, and is only met by the indignant refusal of a second Joseph. Like the false Egyptian woman of Genesis, Melancia resolves to prevent her slave's accusation by a counter-charge : she, too, holds this second Joseph's garment, and rushes with it, tearful and dishevelled, before the tribunal of the Governor. Eugenia's father, Philip, is occupying it that morning for the last time. Cesarinus has received the mandate to supersede him ; and has made his first use of his new authority by paying fresh honours to the memory of his ever-beloved Eugenia. He has placed her statue above the judgment-seat, before which she is now dragged in the mean garments of a slave to answer her false accuser. This very morning Cesarinus is engaged in dedicating a temple which he has raised to Eugenia ; and, mingled with the dreadful accents of the hateful charge against her, the young Christian's ears are saluted by sounds to her yet more dreadful—those of the impious hymns which exalt her name to the dis-honour of the true God, and proclaim with blasphemous accents “the triumph of the goddess Eugenia.”

Distracted by the thought of being even the innocent occasion of such wickedness, anxious to offer all the reparation in her power to the offended majesty of heaven, Eugenia resolves to die. The father, whom she recognises so easily, but to whose eye she is a total stranger, asks her for her defence, and she makes none. The fiery death, to which her silence must consign her, has no terrors for her constant soul. Willingly, and mutely, Eugenia receives sentence of death from her own father's

lips, beneath the image raised to her honour. The Demon (wiser than herself in this) rejoices to see her about to miss the crown of martyrdom, and to err by permitting herself to die for a falsehood. But the new Marina is not suffered to persevere in her heroic mistake. "Stay," says the aged Helenus, "and disclose the truth." Eugenia obeys the voice of her adopted father, and reveals her sex; adding that Melancia, having accused her of a crime of which she could not possibly have been guilty, will suffer the penalty which she sought to inflict, and be consumed with fire of heaven. This shortly comes to pass; but not till Eugenia has first undeceived her idolatrous worshippers by declaring who she really is.

The scene is a striking one. The Governor starts with horror as he sees his own child in the bondman whom he had doomed to the flames; Cesarinus and the people look amazed from the statue to the meanly dressed form below it, in whose shape and features they see suddenly revealed to them its beauteous original. The guilty Melancia cowers on one side, as though she would hide from her swift-coming judgment; while, with flashing eye and kindling cheek, Eugenia occupies the centre of the scene, and uses all the might of her proved innocence, and regained fairness, to draw the admiring populace from idols to the worship of the true God, as she exclaims¹—

"Of that image ye revere here
I am the original.
I Eugenia am. What fear ye?
What amazes, what alarms you?

¹ Assonants in *e, e.*

What perturbs, what checks all speech here ?
What indeed but the discovery
Of your blindness, now ye see me
By this throne, which is an altar
And tribunal both together,
At the self-same time a criminal
And the goddess whom all reverence.
Here accused, there venerated,
Here abased, for worship set there,
Ye behold me in one instant.
How can these things fit together—
There to stand for adoration,
Here receive of death the sentence ?
Thou behold whom thou dost worship (*To PHILIP*)
Yet condemn ; thou see whom dearly (*To CESARINUS*)
Thou dost love, yet prosecute ;
Thine accused, yet favoured, see here ; (*To MELANCIA*)
· · · · ·
And let all,—all ye behold now
Her to whom your hymns ascended,
And for whom ye lit unknowing
Sacrificial fires, directed
There to give me grateful incense,
Here to burn my flesh intended.”

The populace hearing this, and witnessing Melancia's punishment, which immediately follows, while a thunderbolt at the same time strikes the idol they had been worshipping, begin to proclaim aloud Eugenia's God ; and her father and brother avow themselves converts to the faith. But Cesarinus, the new governor, is persuaded by the false Aurchius that all they have seen is but the work of magic ; and he listens the more readily to the demon's counsel as he now sees his opportunity to gain the long-coveted hand of Eugenia. So he confronts the maiden, as, rejoicing in the victory she has

won for Christ, she stands reunited to her relatives and to her spiritual father, with the following dread alternative :—

“ Alexandria’s Prefect, I
 Sit now in thy father’s place ;
 Therefore must this day’s disgrace
 Fall on me with infamy,
 Or be paid with usury ;
 Lest the highest gods look down
 On me with an awful frown,
 Seeing thee against them fight
 With thy Christian magic’s might
 While I rule within this town.
 All I can I do for thee ;
 Here I offer thee my hand
 If thou wilt, as I command,
 Thy Man-God renounce for me.
 Both thy sire and brother see
 Wrapt in guilt as thine the same,
 Praising now with thee his name ;
 Take their part, then, noting this,
 That so small the distance is
 ‘Twixt this hand and death’s stern claim,
 That within thy choice now lie,
 Here my hand, there punishment.

EUGENIA.

Then I speak our joint intent :
 We have chosen.

CESARINUS.

What ?

ALL THREE.

To die.

CESARINUS.

Woman, who in case so fell
 Dost thy courage high approve,
 Set 'twixt death and my fond love
 Choosing death,—bethink thee well
 That to die is terrible.

EUGENIA.

I esteem myself thrice blest,
 Of my long desire possessed.

CESARINUS.

Take her hence ; lest, gazing thus
 On her face of perfect beauty,
 Courage fail me for my duty.

EUGENIA.

Father ! brother ! Helenus !

THE THREE.

Speak.

EUGENIA.

Deny not ye the faith
 When ye see me die.

HELENUS.

Instead,
 We with thee our blood will shed.”
 (EUGENIA *is led to execution.*)

Cesarinus repents his rash order ; and sends, an instant too late, to recall it. When he learns that the headsman's axe has already done its work, he turns furiously on Aurelius and charges him with having pushed him on to kill Eugenia out of jealousy. But his sword can but

slay the already slain. The Demon extricates himself from the lifeless form which he had so long animated, and stands confessed as the author of the persecution ; while a celestial vision above reveals the martyr mounting upwards on her throne, and around her angels, singing—

“ This Eugenia’s triumph is,
That before hers could not be ;
Since alone in heavenly bliss
Can the saints their triumph see.”¹

¹ A third beautiful martyr-play, “The Two Lovers of Heaven,” has been very well translated by Mr MacCarthy ; who has pointed out, in a note to its first scene, a curious parallel between the perplexity of Goethe’s Faust over the first chapter of St John’s Gospel, and that of its hero, Chrysanthus, over the same texts.

CHAPTER VII.

DRAMA OF ROMANCE.—“LIFE IS A DREAM.”

CALDERON has several plays with subjects borrowed from romances, or invented by himself in a similar style. He gives us in one the eager competition of Archombrotus and Poliarchus for the hand of the fair Argenis, Princess of Sicily, appeased by the discovery, by means of a jewel-token, that the first-named is brother to the lady whom he has been wooing; in another, the adventures of Count Lucanor with the Soldan of Egypt, from whom he redeems by a stratagem the captive Duke of Tuscany, and thus wins Rosamund, his daughter, for his wife. Or again, taking his subject from the better-known tales of knight-errantry, Calderon bids us wander in Boïardo’s deceitful garden of Falerina, with Roland and with Oliver, or behold them fighting manfully with the great Moorish giant, Fierabras, for the possession of the bridge of Mantible; while his treacherous sister, the handsome Floripes, misled by her love for Guy of Burgundy, releases captive Paladins from her brother’s dungeons, slays his giant warder, and boldly casts in her lot with Charlemagne and his peers.

In his eighty-first year Calderon finished a play

which told of the varied fortunes of Leonidas and Marphisa, the lost children of a king, discovered at the *dénouement* of the piece by the engraved plates of metal which each holds ; and in earlier life he dramatised the kindred subject of that romance of Heliodorus which furnished Tasso with his story of Clorinda's birth,—under the name of “The Children of Fortune.” At the close of this play the birth-token of Chariclea, the white daughter of the dusky Ethiopian queen, comes to light just in time to prevent her being sacrificed as a thank-offering for victory by the command of her own mother ; and the medal with its head of fortune which Theagenes had bestowed on Chariclea at their troth-plight, does him a similar good office by restoring him to his aged father, the priest of the Delphic Apollo.

In “The Castle of Lindabridis” we are introduced to an airy fortress which flies about by art magic from place to place, carrying a fair claimant to the throne of Tartary in search of a knight brave enough to win its crown for her by overthrowing in single combat her brother and competitor ; while in “Auristella and Lysidas,” two Amazonian princesses march at the head of armies to rescue their captive brothers, and stand by to guard the lists in which Lysidas is bidden to fight with seven competitors ; the promised reward of the victor being the privilege of wedding, and crowning Queen of Athens, one of the two fair sisters, Auristella and Clariana.

But amusing as are the stories of some of these plays, they are none of them sufficiently important to require a detailed notice in so small a work as the present one. It is otherwise with another drama, which rests on as unsubstantial a basis of fact as they do ; but which

claims the reader's attention, alike by its celebrity, which is more European than that of Calderon's other works, and by the appeal which the treatment of its subject makes to the spectator's higher imagination.

“Life is a Dream,” by its very title, suggests deeper thoughts than are generally roused by Calderon's secular dramas. It is classed by some editors with the “Wonder-working Magician;” and regarded by other critics as Calderon's single specimen of a philosophic play. Only a brief analysis of it will, however, be attempted here, the work having been already done so effectually, some years ago, by the present Archbishop of Dublin, that, for many readers, a short sketch will be quite sufficient.

Basilus, King of Poland, imprisons his son Sigismund from birth in a lonely tower—being moved to do this by his own astrologic science ; which has forewarned him that this son is likely to be the ruin of all concerned with him, and one day to trample on his own father's head. The king has no other child, and is purposing to leave his kingdom to Astolpho and Estrella, his two sisters' only children ; and, by wedding the two cousins, to conciliate their rival claims. There is an objection to this arrangement not known to Basilius, and carefully hidden by Astolpho. The young prince is already engaged in honour to Rosaura; a beautiful lady of mysterious parentage, who, abandoning her native Muscovy, pursues her recreant lover to Poland, in male attire, armed with the sword which was her birth-token.

The play arouses our curiosity for her fortunes and for those of Sigismund from the first, by making the fair stranger stumble, in its opening scene, on the Tower where the unhappy prince lies chained,—ferocious as a

eaged tiger, yet capable of being softened by her bewitching vision. Clotaldo, the stern warder, who rushes in after a time to exact the penalty threatened on all who invade the king's secret, is softened by the sight of the sword ; for he knows it for the one he gave in happier days to Violante, Rosaura's mother. Nor, as it happens, does Basilius feel enraged when Clotaldo discloses to him tremblingly that two foreigners have seen the jealously guarded prince. His readily accorded pardon enables Rosaura's father, without disclosing their true relationship even to herself, to place her, as his niece, in the service of her rival, the Princess Estrella. Now the king's leniency on this occasion sprang from a strange cause. He has formed the resolution, which he discloses to his two heirs-presumptive and to his nobles assembled in conclave, to give Sigismund one chance of vanquishing his cruel fate, by letting him assume his true rank for a single day, and seeing how he will comport himself under the trial. "Human freewill" (so he argues) "can conquer the most adverse influences of the stars. Let Sigismund show that he is worthy to reign, and I will not set aside his just claims on the succession. Should his bad conduct justify my fears, he must return to his dungeon." But to prepare for the latter much more probable alternative—for how should a man brutalised by years of cruel confinement become suddenly endowed with all kingly virtues ?—and to break the almost inevitable fall, Basilius orders a strong sleeping-potion to be given to his son, and has him transported in a deep slumber to his palace. There, like the awakened sleepers of the 'Arabian Nights,' and of the induction to the "Taming of the Shrew"—only not for a jest, as in their

case, but for a very serious purpose,—the amazed prince, opening his eyes in a soft and sumptuous bed, is made to find himself in a rich apartment, with obsequious servants attending on him, and courtiers advancing with their congratulations. As might have been expected, he cannot stand the sudden change well. He responds discourteously to his cousin Astolpho's greeting; he throws an officious servant, who warned him to maintain a greater reserve towards the lady Estrella, out of the window; and when that star is, as he says, eclipsed by a sun in the person of Rosaura, and his violent wooing of her is interrupted by Clotaldo, he all but kills his former tutor, and Astolpho in his defence; and tells his father, who reproves him for his disrespect to age, that he has a long account to settle with him for the sufferings he has endured at his hands.

Basilus acknowledges the failure of his experiment, and gives orders for a second stupefying potion. By its aid his son is transferred once more to his lonely tower; that, awaking in the same rude dress, bound by the same chain as when he fell asleep the first time, he may take all that has come and gone between for a strange dream. A sympathising bystander exclaims—

“Never from that sleep profound
Wake, O Sigismund, or rise,
To behold with wondering eyes
All thy glorious life o'erthrown,
Like a shadow that hath flown,
Like a bright brief flame that dies!”—(M.)

But awake he must. His father, disguised, stands in the background to observe without being seen. Clotaldo, Sigismund's governor, presents himself to him

alone, and pretends to wonder at his having indulged in so long a sleep. "If all I have seen in that sleep is indeed a dream," says the unhappy youth, "I may well be asleep still; for I see nothing now that looks more real than what I beheld then." "Tell me your dream," says Clotaldo. "If it was one," says Sigismund,—"still let me say, of the magnificence which surrounded me so palpably—I was for a while Prince of Poland." "I hope you rewarded me handsomely," says the tutor, as if in jest. "Nay," is the half-remorseful reply, "twice I was putting thee to a traitor's death, —I took vengeance on all men—one woman alone I loved. Surely there must have been truth in the vision; for, though all the splendours have vanished, that love remains." Clotaldo listens, and then leaves him with these warning words—

"Yet in dreams it were well done,
 Sigismund, to honour one
 Who has watched and loved thee so,
 Since good does not perish, though
 It be wrought in dream alone."

(*Exit.*)

SIGISMUND.

Truth—and let us then restrain
 This the fierceness of our pride,
 Lay this wilfulness aside,
 Lest perchance we dream again;
 And we shall so who remain
 In a world of wonder thrown,
 Where to live and dream are one.
 For experience tells me this,
 Each is dreaming what he is,
 Till the time his dream is done.
 The king dreams himself a king,

And in this conceit he lives,
Lords it, high commandment gives,
Till his lent applause takes wing,
Death on light wings scattering,
Or converting (oh sad fate !)
Into ashes all his state ;
How can men so lust to reign,
When to waken them again
From their false dream death doth wait.
And the rich man dreams no less
'Mid his wealth which brings more cares,
And the poor man dreams he bears
All his want and wretchedness ;
Dreams, whom anxious thoughts oppress,
Dreams, who for high place contends,
Dreams, who injures and offends ;
And though none are rightly 'ware,
All are dreaming that they are
In this life until death ends.
I am dreaming—I lie here,
Laden with this fetter's weight,
And I dreamed that I of late
Did in fairer sort appear.
What is life ? a frenzy mere ;
What is life ? e'en that we deem ;
A conceit, a shadow all,
And the greatest good is small.
Nothing is, but all doth seem ;
Dreams within dreams, still we dream."—(D.)

The third Act gives Sigismund an opportunity of showing that this personal experience of the unsubstantial nature of earthly things has not been wholly lost on him. The people of Poland do not like being placed under a Duke of Muscovy's rule, and resist Astolpho's proclamation as heir-apparent ; rising in arms to procure Sigis-

mund's freedom. Soldiers break into his prison and offer to defend his rights. "Must I dream once more?" asks the Prince—"nay, since I have been taught that life is but an empty vision, why need I be bewildered by fresh phantoms? I have had enough of them:”—

"I desire not borrowed greatness,
Nor imaginary glories,¹
Pomps fantastical, illusions
With the faintest breath that bloweth
Of the night wind perishing :
As the buds and bloom disclosèd
By the flowering almond tree,
With such timeless haste unfolded
That the first breath dims their brightness,
Tarnishing and staining wholly
All the light and loveliness
Which its roseate tresses boasted.
Now I know, I know you now,
And I know there falls no other
Lot to every one that dreams.
Cheats avail with me no longer ;
Undeceived, now know I surely
That our life a dream is only."—(D.)

The soldiers point to the crowds gathering outside to salute the son of their king. "I have seen the same things before as clearly," says Sigismund, "and yet it was a dream. Nevertheless, let us dream once more,—only this time not without having in due remembrance the coming waking." Faithful to this resolution, Sigismund, when placed at the head of his adherents, checks his rising anger at Clotaldo's refusal to abide with him and be his guide in his new life; and permits him to go where his loyalty to the old king calls him, saying,

¹ Assonants in *o*, *e*

"Since good, wrought even in our dreams, does not perish, I wish to act nobly:—

"Be it thus or thus—if truth
For the truth's sake ; if the other,
To win friends against the time
When this fleeting dream is over."—(D.)

Meantime Rosaura, grieved at Clotaldo's refusal to revenge her on his preserver, the faithless Astolpho, girds on her sword once more, and meets Sigismund as he advances with his victorious army ; imploring him to maintain her rights. Sigismund is sorely tempted to make an unworthy use of the power thus given him over the beauty so coveted by him before. Why not make the dream as pleasant as possible till the hour of waking comes ? Then wiser thoughts come to him, and he adds—

"But I do confute mine own self
With the reasons I advance.
If a dream, an empty glory,
Who for empty glory here
Would an heavenly glory forfeit ?
What past good is not a dream ?
Who has tasted blisses lofty,
And says not, whenever these are
In his memory revolvèd,
Doubtless I have dreamed it all
Which I saw ? but if my knowledge
Tells me this, and if desire
Is a flame that brightly gloweth,
Yet is turned to dead cold ashes
By the wind that breathes the softest,
Let us then the eternal aim at ;
Fame that no decreases offers,
Blisses that not ever slumber,
Majesty that ne'er reposes."—(D.)

"It is a prince's part to bestow honour, not to take it away," he adds. And with the words, "Rosaura, regard for thine honour makes me avert mine eyes from thy beauty," he leaves the fair suppliant hastily.

Soon after the father's forces meet the son's in battle. The old king is defeated ; and, expecting no mercy at the hands of the ill-treated Sigismund, is about to take to flight when a slight incident changes his purpose. A wounded man, shot in the very hiding-place to which he had run for safety, falls dying at his feet with the warning—

" Since no safety can there be
'Gainst the force of destiny
And the inclemency of fate,
Therefore 'tis in vain thou fliest
Death to which thou draw'st more nigh ;
Oh, take heed, for thou must die,
If it is God's will thou diest."—(M.)

These words seem to Basilius to pronounce sentence on the course which has led to his present danger. The doom which he strove to avert has come upon him through his very efforts to avoid it. He therefore bows his head to his fate ; and, resisting the advice of his friends to try to flee further, goes forth to prostrate himself, as the stars foretold, before the feet of his victorious son, and thus, as he says, help heaven to keep its word.

Then it is that the wisdom taught to Sigismund by his dream-experience manifests itself in all its lustre. "Never," is his solemn reflection, "do those golden letters which the finger of God has traced for us on the azure scroll of heaven lie ; the deceit comes from those

who penetrate their secrets to make a bad use of them. Witness my father, who, warned by them of my evil dispositions, adopted a course of treatment which might have enraged the gentlest, degraded the most generous, of minds. Ill-fortune cannot thus be vanquished, but rather helped forward. So we see to-day. A father—a monarch—kneels at my feet ; and I have been powerless to impede the execution of that decree of fate which his superior age, valour, and wisdom could not conquer.” He concludes by raising his father from the ground, and throwing himself in his turn at his feet as his subject, and, if needs be, his victim. “Thou hast overcome indeed, and art indeed my son,” exclaims the enraptured Basilius ; “the laurel and the palm are thy due.” Sigismund completes his self-conquest by offering his own hand to the Princess Estrella (disengaged some time since from Astolpho by the discovery of his passion for Rosaura), and by requesting his cousin to fulfil his promise to the fair Muscovite. Astolpho demurs on the ground of the cloud which obscures her birth. Clotaldo at once dissipates it by stepping forth to proclaim Rosaura his own daughter ; and, the prince readily consenting to be his son-in-law, the strangely interwoven fortunes of the wandering beauty and the prisoner of the tower are each at the self-same moment brought to a happy issue. All marvel at the change in Sigismund,—at a wisdom and discretion rare in the best taught of princes. But he answers, “Why wonder, since my teacher was a dream, from which I yet fear to awake and find myself once more in prison ? Having learnt that human happiness passes away like a dream, I wish, while yet it lasts, to make a right use of it.”

CHAPTER VIII.

HIS TRAGEDIES OF JEALOUSY.

CALDERON's tragedies on this theme comprise one on "Herod and Mariamne," which has been compared both by Spanish and French critics to "Othello." The noble Asmonean princess, who, though smarting under a sense of deep wrong inflicted by her husband's order for her death, still pleads successfully for his life with Octavius, is indeed not unworthy to be likened to Desdemona; whom she further resembles, when, unrobing at the close of her last day, she weeps and listens to the song in which her unwitting handmaid summons death; instead of singing her own swan-song herself, like the hapless Venetian. But the catastrophe of the play is accidental. It was Octavius, not Mariamne, whom Herod sought to slay, when he flung the dagger (of old the predicted cause of his wife's death) unawares to quiver in her breast. The sea into which his despair, on finding what he has done, casts him, receives, not an Othello unable to survive the discovery of his wife's innocence, but the victim of adverse circumstances, who has no strength to bear up when the conflicting predic-

tions against which he has long striven fulfil themselves at last in his despite.¹

Nor shall we find an Othello in the heroes of three terrible plays, in each of which a wife guilty, or presumed so, suffers death at her husband's hands. As has often been remarked, Calderon's vengeful husbands know little of "Hate, born of Love, and blind as he ;" for their blows are prompted by wounded pride, rather than by outraged affection ; they are executioners of the sentence given in Honour's court, which dooms to die as often for appearances as for realities ; they have each a far better right than Othello had to style himself

"An honourable murderer, if you like ;
For nought I did in hate, but all in honour."

Take for an instance "The Painter of his own Dishonour." Seraphina, the heroine of this play, is shot by her husband, the disguised artist, along with the man who, against her will, carried her from her home. Her own father and the father of her betrayer are alike present, when the slayer steps forth from his hiding-place, and addresses both them and the prince who sent him to paint the concealed beauty's picture in these words : "Behold a picture, painted with blood by the painter of his own dishonour. I am Don Juan de Roca. Ye all see your injuries before you. Kill me and avenge them : you, Don Pedro, because the fair one whom you gave me, I return to you a bleeding corpse ! You, Don

¹ "Jealousy the Greatest Monster" (the play in question) is no truer to history than other, so-called, historical dramas of Calderon. "The dull, cold-blooded" Octavius is gallant in it beyond measure ; and the fierce Idumean, Herod, is transformed in it beyond recognition.

Luis, because here lies your son, slain by my hand ; and you, Prince, because I have painted with such red enamel the portrait you bespoke from me.” No man takes up the challenge. All present feel that Juan has only done his duty as a Spaniard and a gentleman. “Flee, and I will protect your flight,” says the Prince. “No need for that,” say the two stern fathers ; “we are obliged, not affronted, by the justice done on our two unhappy children.” Don Juan bows gravely to them and departs. He has no third pistol in reserve for his own breast. He had loved Seraphina well, but not with the love with which Othello loved Desdemona.

A narration in a drama by Tirso de Molina, suggested to Calderon the catastrophe of “A secret Vengeance for a secret Affront”—a more terrible play than even the one just mentioned. Its historical background is to be found in Sebastian of Portugal’s unfortunate expedition to Africa. His brave subject, Don Lope de Almeida, quits his service to marry Leonor, and returns to it when his brief dream of married happiness is over,—doubtless to perish with his king. His bravery, approved at home and abroad, enlists the sympathies of the spectators ; and yet they cannot refuse their pity to Leonor, who, married to Lope by proxy, on the false report of her Spanish lover’s death, quits Spain, her native country, under her uncle’s charge, to meet the husband whom, as yet, she has never seen ; and, while waiting for him beside a river, has an interview with a jewel merchant, who proves to be her first love (not slain, only wounded), Luis de Benavides. He has sent her a diamond ring as a specimen of his wares ; and she has recognised it as a love-token given by herself. But with a self-com-

mand and power of dissimulation which early show the audience to what dangerous keeping Don Lope is about to intrust his honour, Luis and Leonor betray themselves neither by word nor sign. The uncle and the attendants think they hear a jeweller's artful recommendation of his wares, and a customer's courteous refusal, when they are really listening to the bitter reproaches of a disappointed lover, and to his lady's exculpations of herself. "Here," says the merchant, "is a rich clasp ; here is a diamond Cupid ; and—

" I a heart, in which no stone
False is found, here with me bring ;
Likewise many a precious ring—
See memorials fair in one.
But an emerald¹ I deplore,
Stolen from me on my road
For its tint that perfect showed ;—
I the like shall see no more.
By it shone a sapphire blue ;²
But the emerald they took
Only, leaving me to look
On that stone of azure hue :
So I could not choose but cry,
Why, thus cruel, take away
Hope, yet leave with me to stay,
By this token, jealousy ?
If, fair ladye, you approve,
I will place before your eyes
That same heart, those memories,
That bright clasp, that radiant Love."

Leonor hides, with Spartan firmness, the anguish

¹ Hope.

² Jealousy: the green-eyed monster wears a different colour in Spain.

caused by this appeal. She cannot draw back now, since she is already wedded to another. So she answers, with seeming indifference :—

“ Even should your jewels be
Fully equal to their praise,
You upon the worst of days
Here have come to show them me.
I had pleasure felt (how great !)
Mustering o'er their beauties' sum,
Had you only earlier come ;
As it is you come too late.
What would men of me report,
If, when I have given my hand,
Waiting till my husband land,
Here I at such hour could sport,—
Worse, my mind could wholly give
To that heart of jewels rare,
To that clasp, though firm and fair,
To that Love where flamelets live ?
Take your diamond too, though one
I in it must lose, I know,
Which with faithful light will glow,
Beanteous like the very sun.
On my cold unwillingness
Seek not now to cast the blame ;
Blame yourself, too late who came,—
Hence flows all your ill success.”

Don Lope's boat is seen approaching ; and while the rest go out to receive him, Leonor is left a moment alone with Luis. He has just time to upbraid her with her fickleness, and she to answer, “ Had I not wept for thee as dead, never shouldst thou have styled me forgetful or changeable,” when the husband, whom, in the bitterness of her soul, she now calls enemy, advances to greet her.

Luis hears in the dissembling words of courtesy which the bride addresses to Don Lope the acknowledgment of her unchanged affection for himself ; and resolves to follow her into Portugal, saying, after he has seen the couple depart : “ Better die of pleasure than of pain, be killed by love than by jealousy ; and Leonor love I must, even at the cost of my life.”

The next act shows him carrying out this wrong design. Don Lope notes a form too frequently hanging about his house in Lisbon. Worse than that, he and his friend Juan (a model of discreet friendship) all but surprise the cavalier inside Lope’s house. His excuse, when at last seen by the husband, is a very specious one ; but there is a flurry about Leonor’s manner which would have been absent had she known nothing of the stranger, who said he ran in to avoid an enemy’s pursuit. Then, too, when King Sebastian invites Lope to follow him in his African expedition, it is the newly-wedded wife who (though with pretended unwillingness) consents to her husband’s departure,—the faithful Juan who urges him to stay. Under these circumstances Don Lope appears to continue strangely blind, and his friend thinks that he ought to open his eyes. Yet, before undertaking so delicate an office, he feels his way by putting to him an imaginary case. “ I have a friend,” he says, “ who has done a thing which is leading men to cast reflections on his honour. Ought I to tell him what they say about him ? ” Don Lope comprehends his meaning, and replies—“ If you ask my advice, keep silence. Were I in such a case, and were the best friend I have to come and tell me I was dishonoured, I should slay him on the spot.”

Don Juan says no more; but the king ventures to give his trusty follower a hint, by regretting that he must forego his help in the approaching campaign. They have met accidentally, when Sebastian exclaims—

“ ’Tis thou, Don Lope ! Ah ! if I that sword
Of yours in Afric could but have, the lord
Soon should I be of all the Moorish pride.

LOPE.

How should my sword hang idly by my side,
To rust in peaceful sheath, for useless known,
When you, my noble master, draw your own ?
I go, with you, to conquer or be slain :
What could in Portugal my steps detain
At such a time ?

THE KING.

Are you not married ?

LOPE.

True,

My lord, but marriage-ties cannot undo
My being myself : rather they bid me claim
In right of double honour double fame.

THE KING.

How, being wed of late,
Will your wife take this ?

LOPE.

As an honour great,
To you, for such a high intent,
A soldier in her husband to present ;
For, brave and manly-hearted, her worst woe
Would be him severed from your side to know.
So I, who fought for mine own fame before,
Now fight for mine and then for hers yet more ;
With such desires as these I well may leave
My wife a while.

THE KING.

For truth I all receive :

But yet I spoke because I thought such gladness
 It were unjust so swift to turn to sadness ;
 And, great though this emprise on which we roam,
 You might, Don Lope, be worse missed at home."

(Exit with his attendants.)

Don Lope stands thunderstruck. "Is my affront become so public that it has come to the ears of the king ?" he thinks. "I will go with him ; but on my return I will inflict such a chastisement on the offenders as the whole world shall hear of." Just at this point in his reflections, Don Juan is heard engaged in a combat with some adversaries ; who, however, fly from his vigorous blows. He enters and explains : "I had to fight these men ; for I overheard them talking of my old misfortune. Vainly have I washed my honour in the blood of a cavalier who once gave me the lie ; I am always known, not as the man who avenged the affront, but as the man who received it. Such is life," he adds, turning significantly to the friend whom he evidently desires to warn by his own example. "Often has the vengeance spoken, where the offence would have kept silence." Don Lope remains alone, pondering these last words, and reflecting—

"Should I then deal vengeful blow
 For the wrong which wounds me so,
 I but spread it far and wide,—
 Since, by vengeance, loud is cried
 What misfortune mutters low.
 Let my courage fierce and fell
 'Venge that hurt I now deplore ;

Yet deceived the crowd will tell,
This is he the wrong who bore ;
Not, ‘ ‘Tis he who paid it well.’
Thus should I my hand to-day
Bathe in blood, that blood would say,
‘ Come, behold his injury ;’
Since my vengeance known must be,
Where my wrong concealed might stay.
Therefore not in public gaze
Let me seek it (heavens!), but lurk,
Hiding it in darksome maze ;
Since, when wronged, the prudent work,
Patient, crafty, by mute ways.”

In the midst of these meditations appears their subject, Don Luis. He is reading a note from Leonor ; in which she at last takes the decisive and fatal step of inviting him to a secret interview, in the country-house where she is to live during her husband's absence with the king. It is on the other side of the bay. The boatmen are all occupied, and Luis is vexed to think that the means of crossing may be wanting to him. A barque is ready for Lope ; and on ascertaining the Spaniard's wish to go across, the Portuguese politely offers him a place in it. The infatuated Luis gladly accepts the service of the man whom he is preparing to wrong so deeply ; and each expresses his satisfaction in an aside :—

LOPE.

“ You with me shall cross. (*Aside.*) I see
Nigh my vengeance-hour at last.

LUIS (*aside*).

Who has in the world surpassed
Ever my felicity ?

LOPE (*aside*).

He is given to my hands,
By those hands to die to-day.

LUIS (*aside*).

Think ! the husband shows the way
Where the wife with welcome stands ! ”

The boatman is asked to wait a minute to give a message to Don Lope's servant. “ You had better not get in without me,” he says. “ The rope which holds my boat is a bad one.” The two gentlemen embark notwithstanding, Don Luis murmuring to himself—

“ Thus himself he takes me where
I his honour may bedim.

LOPE (*aside*).

I, in this wise, carry him
Where his life I need not spare.”

A minute later the boatman turns round and sees the boat drifting out into the sea,—as he fears, to the certain destruction of the two who have despised his warning.

Then the scene changes. We stand in the evening light and watch Leonor awaiting her husband's arrival ; conscious of her guilty secret, yet hardening herself in her false security. Don Juan joins her ; and together they hear a cry for help on the waters, at which Leonor starts, for it is that of a voice only too well known to her. Then through the gathering twilight a swimmer struggles to land ; and wet, but still holding a dagger, Don Lope stands before his wife. The water has washed the blood from his weapon ; so there is no outward witness to contradict him as he details the misfortune

which has befallen him. His boat has been upset and his companion drowned. "A Castilian gentleman," so he says, "whom I strove in vain to save, named—unless my memory play me false,—Don Luis de Benavides." At the news of his death Leonor swoons; Lope has her carried into the house, remarking to his friend that it was no wonder that the thought of her husband's imminent peril had made her faint. Then follows a soliloquy, in which he prepares to stab his wife for her purposed crime, as he has already stabbed her intended accomplice; and to call in fire to hide his second act of vengeance, as the water had hid his first.

"For my intents
I can safely trust alone
To the ever-silent shown
Care of the Four Elements.
One half of my vengeance dire,
There I air and water gave;
Here the other half shall have
Of my griefs the earth and fire."

He is as good as his word. The king, with the Duke of Braganza, and his train, are drawing near the spot whence they are to embark for Africa; when a terrible spectacle disturbs their enjoyment of the night's calm beauty, and the monarch's tender and hopeful farewells to the beloved country which he is never to see again. Don Lope's mansion is in flames; into which they, with difficulty, detain his friend, Juan, from precipitating himself. His sacrifice is, however, not needed. The master of the house extricates himself alive from its burning ruins, carrying his wife in his arms: only she, alas! is dead, having perished in the stifling smoke,—as

her disconsolate husband *says*, amid panegyrics on her virtues, and tears and sobs at his own irreparable loss. That loss, however, as he tells the king, has one compensation :—

"This sad horror, hap most fearful,
Yet one consolation leaves me,
And 'tis that I now can serve you ;
For since thus ill fate has freed me,
I can not be '*missed at home.*'
I will go with you, a seeker
Where to end my life, if haply
Griefs like mine can e'er be ended."

Semi-oriental in tone as is this tragedy, and horrible with its ever-brooding mystery of suspicion—sharply as in it the poniard, dipped in the "waters of jealousy," cuts asunder the most sacred of human ties, it yet, perhaps, deserves the preference which Archbishop Trench has expressed for it over the "Physician of his own Honour"—the most famous play of Calderon of the class to which it belongs. The death we have witnessed, ghastly as it is, yet at least cannot be called—like the catastrophe of "The Physician"—the execution of the guiltless. Fit justice is meted to the accomplice, and the executioner's own hands are clean. The wife whom he slays was moreover his first, as we feel she will have been his latest, love.

In all these particulars "The Physician of his own Honour" differs from "The Secret Affront." Its hero, Don Gutierre de Solis, was betrothed to the lady Leonor; but an unmerited aspersion on her fair fame causes him to reject her, and to wed another. His love for Mencia is therefore of recent date. His rival, Prince Henry of

Trastamar, quits Seville betimes ; but, had he stayed there, the indications afforded scarcely lead us to think that Gutierre would have ventured to strike his sovereign's brother. Lastly, and most important, Dona Mencia, is innocent throughout. She can appeal to the prince himself to vouch for the fact that his devoted courtship ever found her cold. Not that she did not love him ; but she loved honour more. Her dignified answer to his reproaches on her marriage does not even acknowledge so much as this ; and from that answer she does not swerve, even in the perilous interview which Henry afterwards steals with her in her garden, in which he is so nearly surprised by her husband. But to that husband Mencia does not dare to tell the truth ; and appearances go on becoming more and more fatally against her. The prince has dropped a dagger in the garden, and Gutierre has found it. On another evening Mencia's husband steals up to her as she sleeps in a summer-house. She mistakes him in the gloom for her unwelcome lover, and addresses to him the words which might have destroyed the peace of a less sensitive mind : “Your Highness does wrong to imperil me a second time. *Do you think I can put out the light every evening and get you forth in safety, as I did at your last visit?*” Worse is yet to come. Gutierre carries the dagger and his complaint to the king—Pedro the Cruel, as we style him ; the Justicer, as a favourable section of his own subjects termed him. The king reproves his brother sharply within hearing of Gutierre, whom he has bidden to listen unseen to their interview. The effect of his reproaches, as far as he is himself concerned, is Henry's departure from Seville,—the commencement of

that quarrel, which was only ended by the deadly blow from a brother's hand, which laid Pedro low beneath the walls of Montiel.¹ But, for the luckless Mencia, their consequences are yet more tragic ; since Henry's defence of his own conduct sounds in her husband's ears like an avowal of her guilt. Last, and worst, Gutierre surprises his wife in the act of writing to the prince, imploring him not to leave Seville ; yet her purpose in doing this is merely to avoid the compromising reports concerning the occasion of his absence, which she knows would be quickly spread.

Mencia, then, is as pure in conduct, if not so pure in heart, and far from being as guileless, as Desdemona ; but the apparent proof of her guilt is strong as was that which destroyed

“ The gentle lady wedded to the Moor ; ”

and, bearing in mind that to Gutierre honour is more than life, more even than love,—a thing that, like the ermine of the fable, cannot see one stain on its perfect white and live,—who can wonder that he takes up the pen (dropped by his fainting wife when he snatched the letter from her) and writes her sentence with it thus : “ Love adores, but honour abhors thee : the one slays, the other gives thee warning. Thou hast yet two hours to live ; thou art a Christian—save thy soul—thy life is past saving.”

Few more tragic situations can be imagined than that of Mencia after she has read this scroll of doom ; when the silence of the house in which no servant answers her

¹ See “The Death of Don Pedro” and “The Proclamation of King Henry” in Lockhart's ‘Spanish Ballads.’

call, and the locked door of her own apartment with its grated windows looking out on a high-walled garden, convince her that from its decree no appeal is open to her. Horrible, too, beyond most dramatic horrors, is the succeeding scene, when (on the expiration of the two hours' respite) Gutierre enters the outer room, leading a surgeon with bandaged eyes, whom he has compelled at the dagger's point to do his bidding : while, in the inner chamber, tapers burn by a death-bed, on which lies the veiled form of Mencia, with a crucifix by her side. The surgeon goes in, as he is bid, to open her veins ; while Gutierre hoarsely murmurs, “I am about to cure my sick honour by a bleeding : many cures cost blood.” “I die innocent : may heaven never demand my blood of thee,”¹ sounds in stifled accents from the inner gloom, and then there is silence.

Now in the street outside patrols, with a single attendant, King Pedro—stolen forth, like Haroun Alraschid, to learn what his people are doing and saying about his rupture with his brother. His presence saves the surgeon's life ; whom Gutierre meant to poniard to prevent his strange tale from coming abroad, but whom he leaves in the street, blindfolded as he is, at the sight of a witness. The man tells his story to the king, adding that he shall know the house again despite of its master's precaution ; for he took care, as he left it, to smear his bloody hand over the door. In the cold grey light of dawn Pedro betakes himself to the street where Gutierre's town-house is ; and, rather with grief than surprise, beholds the red token on its portal. At this moment comes by, on her way to early mass, Leonor, the

¹ So we learn from the surgeon's recital to the king.

rejected of Gutierre ; whose cries for justice against her defamer have been heard by the king. He sees his way to right her, now that heaven has so signally smitten her adversary, and bids her wait a moment by his side. It is not long before, with cries of despair, Gutierre issues from his house, bewailing the *accident* (a bandage displaced after a bleeding) which has deprived him of the best of wives. Through the wide-opened door, in a distant recess, is seen, lying white and motionless, the fair woman who bore herself, on the whole, so well in the hard combat between love and duty ; and whom, ere love could vanquish, the rudely-flung truncheon has recalled from the weary lists. King Pedro gives one start of horror, then bids them hide the ghastly spectacle, and prepares to do justice alike to the living and the dead. “ You are now free to espouse Leonor,” he says to Gutierre ; “ her character has been abundantly cleared : marry her at once.”

“ *Gutierre*. Let me weep a little longer : scarcely saved from the storm, would you have me tempt the sea once more.

King Pedro. I command it.

Gu. A word with your Majesty in private. What if I should again find your brother disguised in my house ?

King P. Give no credence to suspicions.

Gu. How if I once more discover Prince Henry’s dagger in my chamber ?

King P. Servants may be to blame for that.

Gu. How if he hovers round my house both by night and by day ?

King P. Then complain to me.

Gu. How if I do so, and overhear something still worse ?

King P. What matter if, as all own, her honour be a wall none can shake ?

Gu. But what can I do if I intercept a letter begging of the prince to stay ?

King P. There is a remedy for everything.

Gu. Can there be one for this?

King P. Certainly.

Gu. And what?

King P. Why, your own.

Gu. And that is?

King P. To bleed her.

Gu. What say you?

King P. Go: have your door washed. There is a blood-red print upon it.

Gu. Men in office, my lord, set over their portals shields emblazoned with their arms. My profession is honour; and so I have set upon my door my bloody hand, for honour can never be washed clean again except by blood.

King P. Then give that hand to Leonor. I know she deserves it.

Gu. I give it. But observe, Leonor, it is dyed with blood.

Leo. I neither marvel nor tremble at the sight.

Gu. Take notice that I have acted once as physician to my honour, and am not likely to forget the art.

Leo. Cure *me* in the same way,—should I need it."

So ends a play well suited in its merciless severity to the days in which its scene is laid; interesting by its well-drawn picture of a famous king of Castile, by the skill with which the meshes of an inextricable ruin are woven around the hapless Mencia, and by the quick retribution dealt out, alike for her wrongs and for another's, to her destroyer; but piteous beyond measure, and almost beyond endurance, in its delineation of the cruel result of Prince Henry's unpunished wooing—the stealthy step, the midnight stab, the shedding of that innocent blood, which was long seen by the popular imagination uneffaced and uneffaceable on the portal of the great house of Solis in Seville.

CHAPTER IX.

HIS "ALCALDE OF ZALAMEA" AND MOORISH TRAGEDIES.

LOPE DE VEGA's dramas of humble life (only a few of which have been preserved to us) have been little imitated by Calderon. His "Luis Perez, the Galician," is a bold robber of some birth and breeding; and the only time when he deliberately elects to tread in the steps of his great predecessor among the low-born and uncourtly is in his "Mayor of Zalamea"—a striking dramatic version of an occurrence said to have been real. Mendo, the hero of de Vega's "Wise Man at Home,"¹ is thought to have given Calderon hints for the character of his peasant judge; and that character is well drawn and natural, marked by many curious and individual traits. Lope de Figueroa, the brave commander of the Flanders regiment, quartered in the rich yeoman, Peter Crespo's, house, on the march to Lisbon, is equally distinctly painted—with his quick and choleric temper, his soldier's oaths, and his real generosity of disposition. How well this brief dialogue sets the two men before us! Crespo, who has secluded his beautiful and discreet daughter Isabel from the prying gaze of the soldiers, has been an-

¹ "El Cuerdo en su Casa."

noyed to find her privacy invaded by a young captain, Don Alvaro. Don Lope, luckily for all parties, has arrived in time to prevent a fight, has prudently ordered his intrusive officer to seek other quarters, and has lodged himself in Crespo's house.¹

"Crespo. I really ought to thank you heartily for coming just as you did, sir, else I'd done for myself.

Lope. How so ?

Cres. I should have killed this popinjay.

Lope. What, sir, a captain in his Majesty's service ?

Cres. Ay, a general, if he insulted me.

Lope. I tell you, whoever lays his little finger on the humblest private in the regiment, I'll hang him.

Cres. And I tell you, whoever points his little finger at my honour, I'll cut him down before hanging.

Lope. Know you not you are bound by your allegiance to submit ?

Cres. To all cost of property, yes ; but of honour, no, no, no ! My goods and chattels—ay, and my life—are the king's, but my honour is my own soul's, and that is—God Almighty's.

Lope. 'Fore God, there's some truth in what you say.

Cres. 'Fore God, there ought to be, for I've been some years saying it."—(F.)

The independent peasant and the kind-hearted if testy Don Lope get on well together. Isabel and her cousin Ines are summoned from their seclusion to do honour to the brave old soldier, as he sups under their vine by the fountain in their garden. And when the voice of the wicked captain's serenaders² outside disturbs their tran-

¹ Mr Fitzgerald's vigorous prose suits the homely dialogue, which is of course in verse in the Spanish.

² The song they sing (agreeably to Calderon's plan of quoting favourite songs in his plays) is this pretty one of Gongora's :—

quillity, it is Lope who sees that his kind host and his son take no harm from the fray into which their natural indignation carries them, and who sternly commands their disturber to march his men forthwith out of Zalamea.

Then, leaving his worthy entertainer safe, as he thinks, Don Lope prepares to precede the king to Lisbon; little thinking of the terrible shame and grief which are about to fall on the house which has received him so hospitably. With him goes Juan, Crespo's son, anxious to begin a career of arms under such good auspices. The father's homely wisdom as he blesses his son's departure has been often commended. It has a Shakespearean ring.

"Crespo. By God's grace, boy, thou com'st of honourable, if of humble, stock. Bear both in mind, so as neither to be

"Las flores del romero,
Niña Isabel;
Hoy son flores azulés,
Y mañana serán miel;"—

thus charmingly (if diffusely) paraphrased in Mr Fitzgerald's version :—

1.

"Ah for the red spring rose,
Down in the garden growing,
Fading as fast as it blows,
Who shall arrest its going?
Peep from thy window and tell,
Fairest of flowers, Isabel.

2.

Wither it would, but the bee
Over the blossom hovers,
And the sweet life ere it flee
With as sweet art recovers.
Sweetest at night in his cell,
Fairest of flowers, Isabel."

daunted from trying to rise, nor puffed up so as to be sure to fall. How many have done away the memory of a defect by carrying themselves modestly ; while others, again, have gotten a blemish only by being too proud of being born without one. There is a just humility that will maintain thine own dignity, and yet make thee insensible to many a rub that galls the proud spirit. Be courteous in thy manner, and liberal of thy purse, for 'tis the hand to the bonnet and in the pocket that make friends in this world ; of whom to gain a good one all the gold the sun breeds in India, or the universal sea sucks down, were a cheap purchase. Speak no evil of women. I tell thee, the meanest of them deserves our respect, for of women do we not all come ? . . . My son, God bless thee ! There !—and now go, for I am beginning to play the woman.”—(F.)

Such is the man, displayed to us in the two first Acts, in all his abundance of plain, practical common-sense, upon whom, when the third Act of the play begins, the most horrible of undeserved misfortunes has fallen. Upon him has come that calamity which Virginius only feared ; and, bound to a tree by the satellites of the miscreant who violently tore his daughter from him, he has had no opportunity of using his knife even to give her such deadly succour as the Roman father bestowed upon his child. When, half mad with shame and sorrow, the unhappy Isabel rushes through the wood in the early morning light, to fall, with wet cheeks and dishevelled hair, at the feet of her father (whose pride she was but the day before), imploring him for death, the boon, if given, would still come too late. It is thus that Calderon depicts her anguish, while as yet she has no other witness than the dewdrops and the dawn, from which she shrinks as “a thing reproved :”—

ISABEL.

“Never dawn upon these eyelids¹
 Light of day so fair that glitters,
 Lest thy name with shamed abhorrence
 Of my very self should fill me !
 And, oh thou, of all the star-host
 Flying spring-tide,² swift as brilliant,
 Give, oh ! give not to the dawning
 Place to tread thy plain’s blue stillness,
 Blotting out thy vision peaceful
 By her smiles through tears that quiver !
 Or, if come she must, then let her
 Come all tearful, smiles forbidden.
 Do thou longer, greatest planet,
 In the sea’s cold foam-bed linger !
 Let the night her tremulous empire
 For this once extend, nor swiftly
 Fly, as is her wont ; so causing
 Men who see thy godhead listen
 To my prayers, to say thine actions
 Freewill guides, fate does not fix them.
 Wherefore shouldst thou wish to rise
 To behold in my sad history
 Sin the most enormous found,
 Cruelty of all most wicked,
 Which, heaven wills, with cry for vengeance
 Should in man’s account be written ?
 But, alas ! alas ! thou seemest
 Harsh of rule, too, nor dost listen
 To my prayers ; for I no sooner
 Begged thee to delay, than glimmers
 Thy great torch, in awful beauty,
 From the mountain-tops uplifted.
 Now it fronts me full. Ah me,
 With so many pains to sting me ;

¹ Assonants, *i. e.*² The morning-star.

• By such evil fortune hunted,
So much anguish, hast thou risen,
Too, in wrath against mine honour ?
Whither can I go ? ah ! whither ?"

But when she has found her father, unbound him, and bidden him slay her, Crespo tenderly raises her from the ground ; and, with words of pious submission, leads her back to her home. On their way they meet the notary of the town. He has news for them. Crespo has just been elected Mayor of Zalamea, and is wanted immediately ; as a captain of the king's troops—who passed through the day before—has been carried back into the town severely wounded by an unknown hand. Not an unknown one to his hearers ; for the unhappy girl has just told her father how, by a strange accident, her brother appeared on the scene too late to save, but not too late to avenge, her.

Crespo hastens to assume his office, and, wand in hand, proceeds to arrest the captain ; who (his wound proving, after all, but a slight one) is deeply mortified to find that what he considers a venial indiscretion has exposed a nobleman like himself to such an insult at peasant hands. However, the court-martial to which he appeals will, he feels persuaded, promptly set all to rights ; and, so assured, he rudely rejects the father's touching request to take all he has and restore his daughter's honour by marrying her. Fortunately for the ill-fated Isabel, Don Alvaro's pride leaves her to seek the far safer asylum of a convent. Crespo condescends to tears and to the most abject entreaties ; but, on being brutally repulsed, rises to his feet, confronts the wrong-doer "in his rights as a man," and orders him straight to prison.

Captain. To prison ! You can't do it !

Crespo. We'll see.

Capt. Am I a *bond-fide* officer or not ?

Cres. And am I a straw magistrate or not ? Away with him.

Capt. The king shall hear of this.

Cres. He shall—doubt it not—perhaps to-day, and shall judge between us. By-the-by, you had best deliver up your sword before you go.

Capt. My sword ?

Cres. Under arrest, you know.

Capt. Well, take it with due respect then.

Cres. Oh yes, and you too. Hark ye (*to the constables*), carry the captain with due respect to prison, and there, with due respect, clap on him a chain and handcuffs ; and not only him, but all that were with him (all with due respect), respectfully taking care they communicate not together. For I mean, with all due respect, to examine them on the business, and if I get sufficient evidence, with the most infinite respect of all, I'll wring you by the neck till you're dead, by God !

Capt. Set a beggar on horseback !” (They lead him off.)

—(F.)

The soldier who brought Don Alvaro back to Zalamea, seeing his peril, rushes off with the news to Don Lope ; who returns at full speed to deliver an officer of his from such an unseemly scrape. Who the mayor is of whom he has so much to complain, he tells Crespo at their first encounter that he does not know, adding—

“But, by the Lord, I'll thrash him within an inch of his life.

Crespo. You will ?

Don L. Will I ?

Cres. But will he stand your thrashing ?

Don L. Stand it, or not, he shall have it.

Cres. Besides, might your captain happen to deserve what he met with ?

Don L. And, if he did, *I* am his judge, not a trumpery mayor.

Cres. This mayor is an odd sort of customer to deal with, I assure you.

Don L. Some obstinate clodpole, I suppose ?

Cres. So obstinate, that if he made up his mind to hang your captain, he'll do it.

Don L. Will he ? I'll see to that. And if you wish to see, too, only tell me where I can find him.

Cres. Oh, close here.

Don L. You know him ?

Cres. Very well, I believe.

Don L. And who is he ?

Cres. Peter Crespo."—(F.)

Each is obstinate. Crespo names the depositions which fully establish the captain's guilt. Lope insists on the prisoner being given up to him ; and brings the conversation to an end by ordering his regiment into the market-place to force open the prison if necessary. Crespo follows him, whispering, "I will do what has to be done first."

The scene in the square is a tumultuous one. An attack seems imminent, to meet which a vigorous defence is preparing ; when shouts in the distance announce the approach of King Philip the Second, about to march through Zalamea on his way to be crowned at Lisbon. Both parties refer their dispute to him. He stops, hears both sides, reads the depositions, and then says to Crespo—

"The charge is substantiated, but you have no authority to execute the sentence. You must give up the prisoner.

Crespo. I can hardly do that, my lord, because, as in this little town there is only one tribunal, it executes its own sentences, and this sentence is executed already."

And thereupon the prison-gates open, and the criminal is seen, seated, but dead, the fatal garrote round his neck.

"*King.* And you have dared to do this ?

Crespo. Your majesty said the sentence was just, and what is well said cannot be ill done.

.
King. At least you might have beheaded him as an officer and a gentleman.

Cres. Please your majesty, the Hidalgos hereabout lead such good lives that our executioner is out of practice in beheading.

King. Don Lope, the thing is done, and the death righteously inflicted ; that being so, an error in a matter of detail is a trifle. Let no soldier stay behind ; march them off at once, for we must reach Portugal without delay. (*To Crespo.*) I appoint you Mayor of Zalamea for life."—(F.)

The superiority of the peasant to the gentleman in this play is a thing the possibility of which we should have scarcely expected to find so frankly acknowledged, even in a solitary instance, by its courtly author. The strong sense which he here evinces of the sanctity of the humblest home, and the depth of his sympathy with the honest pride and holy sorrows of the lowly, have brought their own rich reward with them, in the heightened power of conceiving and depicting character which makes "The Mayor of Zalamea" pre-eminent among the dramas of Calderon—inspiring a strong regret that he sought similar sources of poetic interest so seldom, and

that amid scores of featureless Don Diegos and Don Juans he has given to us but one honest Pedro Crespo.

The catastrophe of this tragedy resembles that of a still more painful one by the same author, "Three Judgments at a Blow," in which to save the life of a youth, condemned to die for striking his supposed father, Don Mendo (Prime Minister to Peter the Fourth of Aragon), his real parent, interposes his authority in vain : while Blanche, his nominal mother, vainly unveils to the relentless monarch the sister's shame which her well-meant deception has hidden for so many years. Before their eyes and those of Don Lope de Urrea, Blanche's husband, the criminal is suddenly revealed ; already executed, and holding in his stiffening hand the king's sentence on his crime, and not on it only, but on Mendo's early sin and Blanche's falsehood, expressed in these words :—

" He that reviles and strikes whom he believes
His father, let him die for't ; and let those
Who have disgraced a noble name, or joined
An ill imposture, see his doom, and show
Three judgments summed up in a single blow."—(F.)

But here justice wears sterner and less attractive features than in the "Mayor of Zalamea." Strange to say, Peter of Aragon proves inferior to the dreaded despot alike of history and the drama, Philip the Second ; and the merciless severity of the former contrasts unfavourably with the latter's ready perception that his rustic magistrate's bold deed proceeded after all from a just view of the majesty of law, and with his promptness in setting the seal of his royal approval on Crespo's resolute assertion of the equality of all classes before that august tribunal.

Don Lope de Figueroa (whose military bluster on behalf of his disreputable subaltern does not prevent his seeing the justice of his execution, or parting on good terms with his worthy friend, the mayor) reappears, though in a less prominent capacity, in another deeply interesting tragedy—“Love after Death.” It is founded on a touching tale told by Hita in his “Guerras de Granada,” who says that he learned it from the lips of Tuzani, the principal actor in it. Its scene is laid during the revolt of the Moriscoes in the reign of Philip the Second; and its only anachronism is the intentional one of speaking of the battle of Lepanto as past when that revolt broke out, in order to increase the fame of the great man on whom devolved the painful duty of suppressing it,—Don John of Austria. As in “The Mayor of Zalamea,” we have seen Calderon rise superior to all the prejudices of rank, so we shall see him, even yet more commendably, rise in “Love after Death” above those of his nation and religion, and bespeak our sympathies wholly for the defeated side. With a generosity surpassing that of Shakespeare towards the despised Jewish race, he contemplates the long agony of an expiring nation without exultation, though for centuries the foes of his own people; and his pity for its sorrowful downfall from its high estate makes him forget the wrongs of Christian captives and the profanation of Christian churches. The long years during which the crescent cast its baleful influence over Spain vanish from his eyes, as they fill with tears while gazing on its blood-red setting.

The play begins with a lively picture of that state of affairs in Granada which led to the revolt of the Moriscoes. It shows us their nobles smarting under the distrust

of their sovereign and the disdain of the old Christian grandees,—and the humbler class irritated beyond endurance by Philip the Second's unwise decrees. “The dying embers of that great fire which of old burned throughout Spain” are stirred up into a flame by the royal ordinance which prohibits to the Moriscoes the use of the dress and language of their forefathers, and the observance of their national festivals. There is a keen debate over the new law at the council-board of Granada; and Malec (an aged noble, descended from the Moorish kings) advises that, instead of its being hastily and harshly enforced, the Moriscoes should be gradually and gently weaned from their ancient customs. Mendoza, a haughty Castilian, not only opposes this wise counsel, but taunts its giver; and, as the altercation waxes hot, strikes the old man, as the proud Count of Lozano struck the aged father of the Cid. But Malec has no brave son to avenge his wrong—he has only one daughter, Clara, called the phoenix for her peerless beauty. It is thought by some of their colleagues that the deadly affront (on account of which Mendoza had been sent to prison) would be best repaired by his becoming the son-in-law of the man whom he has insulted. Clara, although loving, and beloved by, Alvaro Tuzani, consents to be made the victim of this reparation. It will cost her her life, she says; but as, not being a man, she has unhappily no such means of defending her parent's honour as the Cid had, she is ready to break her heart in its defence! So she says to her father—

“ Less the loss, since here defaced
Lies, my lord, thy name, that I
Should my life live wretchedly,

Than that thou shouldst live disgraced.
Could I but thy son have been,
Wrath had called me forth to-day,
Well to die, or well to slay ;
As thy daughter, then, I mean
With such help as in me lies
Now to aid thee in thy strife,—
Give thy foe my hand as wife,
And show all men how I prize
Thy dear honour ; since, defying
Men, I could not 'venge thee killing,
I at least am found here willing
To revenge thee now by dying."

Happily for herself, but unhappily for the Moriscoes and for Spain, Clara's self-sacrifice is not required. Mendoza proudly rejects the proposed terms of peace ; and mortally affronts the nobles of Granada by giving them to understand that not even a descendant of their kings can be a fit match for one in whose veins flows the blue blood of Castile. His passion for Isabel, Tuzani's sister, has much to do with Mendoza's refusal of Clara ; but all hope of success in that secret suit vanishes in the profound resentment called forth by this crowning insult.

The second Act of the drama opens on the revolt of the Moriscoes. Three years are supposed to have elapsed since the close of the first Act. The outbreak (cautiously delayed till all preparations were completed) has taken place, the streets of Granada have flowed with blood ; and the Moriscoes have garrisoned three strong hill-towns, and hope to hold them till succours reach them from Africa, and till their brethren in Estremadura and Valencia can rise to join them. The Morisco queen, Isabel Tuzani (a Christian still at heart), finds it hard to

forget her former lover, Mendoza. Her brother, Alvaro, is at last about to celebrate his nuptials with Clara ; who refused to wed him until the stain cast on her father's honour had been washed off by blood. Awaiting their coming in a lovely mountain-valley of the Alpuxarras, the king sees his wife look sad, and bids the musicians divert her melancholy ; thus addressing her :—

“ On soft grass that trees embower,
 Trees that rise our rocks to crown,—
 Where sweet spring in state set down
 Summons round her every flower,
 That her commonwealth in session
 Each bright colour may disclose
 And salute as queen the rose
 Over Flora's rich possession,—
 Seat thyself, fair spouse ! Ye singers,
 See if music can prevail
 To chase from her sorrow pale,
 And to dry the tear that lingers.

.
 Sing, and from her beauty borrow
 Your high theme. Sing ; well agree
 (Old allies in harmony !)
 Music's sweetness and deep sorrow.

SONG.

Ah ! my joys, your lips lock fast !
 Whose ye are ye need not tell.
 Ye are known for mine too well
 By the short time that ye last.”

These sounds fall with but ill augury on the ears of Clara and Alvaro, who now enter. Their wedding is, however, at once celebrated with all show of happiness, according to the Moorish custom, by the simple bestowal

and acceptance of the bridegroom's gifts. These are the rich jewels which are shortly to cost the ill-fated bride her life, and which are afterwards to give the clue by which her murderer is traced. But for the moment the brilliant gems sparkle cheerfully in the sunshine, while the enraptured Alvaro lays them at his beloved one's feet, saying—

“ Gifts to thee, fair paragon,
Lose their worth, defective showing ;
Diamonds on the sun bestowing,
I its due but give the sun.
Cupid here, with arrow fleet
Armed, from me receive ; so learning,
E'en when diamond, Cupid's yearning
To prostrate him at thy feet.
On this string in pearly whiteness
Glisten tears for thine adorning,
Fallen from the eyes of Morning,
Seeing thee outshine her brightness.
Emeralds this fair eagle moulding
Make my hope's fresh colour known ;
For an eagle's eye alone
Can endure *my* sun beholding.
Here, thy turban to hold fast,
Take this ruby clasp ; for I
May my girdle now untie
In my fortune's port at last.”

As if in sad irony on these hopeful words, the distant sound of a drum interrupts the congratulations of the friends, and comes to separate the newly-wedded pair. The enemy's squadrons are seen in the plain far below, led by the future hero of Lepanto, Don John of Austria, and the Morisco king has to take order for the defence. Undertaking the charge of one strong fort himself, he

bids Alvaro hasten to another,—Gavia; while it is thought best for Clara to return for a while with her father to the third, Galera, of which he has the command. Though striving to hope for a happy meeting in the hour of victory, the luckless bride and bridegroom part with the words that greeted their arrival:—

CLARA.

“ Ah ! my joys your lips lock fast !
Whose ye are ye need not tell.

ALVARO.

Ye are known for mine too well
By the short time that ye last.

CLARA.

Joys I grasped but to undo you,
Dying ere that ye were born.

ALVARO.

Rosebuds, gathered ere the morn,
Flowers plucked ere the spring could woo you.”

Contrary to expectation, Galera is the first attacked. Twice Alvaro risks life and honour to carry off his lady. Once he fails through his servant's carelessness, which deprives him of his horse; the second time he reaches the town just as the Spaniards explode a mine and enter its walls through the breach. The flames rise above a scene of pillage and carnage. Women as well as men are put to the sword. The aged Malec falls in a vain attempt to defend the ramparts; while a distant cry for help from his daughter rings in his dying ear. Guided by the

same voice, Alvaro makes his way into the burning house, and rushes out of it with his beautiful bride in his arms. She is bleeding from a mortal wound. The soldier who took her jewels, not content with them, has taken her life also. Her death-dimmed eyes fail at first to recognise her husband, whom she bids, the stranger that she takes him for, seek out at Gavia with the news of her death, and with her last embrace.

ALVARO.

“That embrace which thou dost give me,
No! there is no need to carry
To thy spouse; for, since here ended
Are the days that called him happy,
Forth he comes himself to take it,—
For misfortune never tarries.

CLARA.

That voice, O my loved one, only
Can detain my life departing,
Make me happy in my death-pang.
Let me, let me, thee enclasping,
Die with thy dear arms around me.” (*Dies.*)

Then arises the loud and long lamentation of the Morisco over his “early blighted rose; a marvel of beauty while she lived, but now no less a marvel for her terrible death.” His wail resounds “over the strangest and most fearful tryst ever kept by lover, in which the lady lies bathed in her blood, and the nuptial couch is turned into a tomb;” and his agonised spirit finds some relief in a vow to follow the Spanish troops till he can avenge his bride on her murderer. “So,” he ends, “shall the universe know that ‘Love after death’ can abide in an

Arab bosom ; nor shall death himself be able to vaunt his power to separate two lovers such as we."

This vow, made in the lurid glare of the burning city, is fulfilled in the broad light of day. Alvaro visits the Christian camp, disguised as a common soldier ; and is there taken for the umpire in a gambling dispute. The stake over which the Spaniards have been quarrelling is a diamond Cupid ; readily recognised by Alvaro as one of his own nuptial presents. The owner, he is told, won it a few weeks ago at the sack of Galera. Chance gives him a good opportunity of ascertaining the facts from the soldier in question, whose name is Garces,—since (not as yet suspecting his fearful interest in the man) he draws his sword in his defence, finding him unequally attacked, and, as a brawler in camp, is put with him under arrest. Left alone together, Garces promises Alvaro that his captain, Mendoza, will soon release them both, since he himself stands high in his favour,—deservedly so, as he has laid the whole army under an obligation by discovering a cavern under the rock of Galera, which proved a mine ready made by which to blow up that fortress. "Would, though, I had never found it!" is the unexpected conclusion of his speech. "Why?" asks Alvaro. "Because," Garces rejoins, "fate has been against me from that date forward ; wherefore I know not, unless it be for this, that, as I then slew a beauteous Morisca, whose charms were the very transcript of heaven, I perchance by so doing made heaven my foe." "Tell me how it all happened," says Alvaro ; and Garces, nothing loath, tells his new friend of the capture of the town, and his own good luck in finding his way to the house of the governor.

“ There each room I penetrated,¹
 Searched through every hall full swiftly,
 Till I reached one tiny chamber,
 Last retreat for hiding chosen
 By the fairest Moorish maiden
 That these eyes have ever looked on.
 Oh, what well-skilled hand could paint her!
 But we have no time for pictures.
 Shamed at once and agitated
 By my sight, as though the curtains
 (Of her bed the screen transparent)
 Had been ramparts of a fortress,
 She in them to hide essayed her.—
 But with tears your eyes are filling ;
 And your face is all forsaken
 Of its colour.

ALVARO.

’Tis the memory
 Of misfortunes that assailed me
 Very like to these. . . . Continue.

GARCES.

In I rushed ; rich jewels made her
 Glitter so, she stood so splendid,
 All bedecked with goodliest raiment,
 That she looked as if a lover
 And a bridal she awaited,—
 Not made ready for her burial.
 I, at sight of so much fairness,
 Wished to save her life ; if only
 I might have her love in payment.
 But, so soon as I adventured
 By one snowy hand to take her,

¹ Assonants in *a, e.*

Straightway said she to me : ‘Christian,
 Since my death no fame can gain thee,
 Since no woman’s blood can brighten
 Sword, but leaves instead a stain there,
 Let these jewels quench thine eager
 Thirst for wealth ; this couch leave stainless,
 One pure bosom’s faith respecting,
 To love’s mysteries yet a stranger.’
 But I grasped her.

ALVARO.

Stop this instant,
 Listen, here, consider, stay thee.
 Grasp her not.—My words are idle ;
 Empty fantasies amaze me.
 But go on ; how can it matter
 Unto me what thou narratest ?

GARCES.

She aloud for life and honour
 Cried, beseeching some to aid her.
 I, who heard advancing footsteps,
 Seeing one hope dissipated,
 Would not lose the other also ;
 Nor admit with me as sharers
 Of her gems my fellow-soldiers.
 All my love to vengeance changed then
 (Since one passion quickly passes
 To its opposite) ; enraged me
 Then I know not what fell fury ;
 Moved by which (ah, now it shames me
 To repeat it), I,—a diamond
 Jewel and pearl-string to tear thence,
 Heedless of the snowy heaven,
 Azure-veined, that underlay them,—
 Pierced her breast.

ALVARO (*stabbing him*).

And did thy dagger
With a stroke like this find way there ?

GARCES (*falling*).

Woe is me.

ALVARO.

Die, die, foul murderer.

GARCES.

Thou ? can hand of thine have slain me ?

ALVARO.

Yes ; because this vanished beauty,
Rose whose leaves thy hand defacèd,
Of my very life the soul was.
'Tis her husband's hand that slays thee."

The cries of the dying man bring Mendoza, Lope de Figueroa, and Don John of Austria, to the spot. Alvaro's tale excites their sympathy, and the plain-spoken Don Lope gives his opinion without the slightest hesitation, thus—

LOPE.

"Had he killed your lady ?

ALVARO.

Yes.

LOPE.

Then you did right. (*To Don John.*) Let him go, my lord, for his offence deserves praise rather than punishment ; for you yourself would kill the man who killed your lady-love : by God, I know you would, or you would not be Don John of Austria."

Of this play (which closes with the surrender, by the widowed Isabel, of the Moriscoes' last fortress) Sismondi has said that "it makes us better acquainted with the revolt of Granada than do the details of any of the historians." And no wonder, because they do not possess either the insight or the sympathy of the poet. To the ordinary Spanish historian the Moor was an alien in race and creed, at whose disasters he could rejoice with a safe conscience ; to Calderon (the witness of the decay caused by the expulsion of the Moriscoes to his country), the Moor, if an erring brother, was a brother still, "united to him by the same spirit of chivalry, by the same punctilious honour, and by love of the same country : ancient wars and recent persecutions had not been able to extinguish in him the memory of the early bonds which united them."¹ Thus the spectator of this drama feels himself set entirely on the side of the vanquished—a remarkable thing surely, when we consider who its author was, and for what audience he wrote. For it is Calderon, the courtly and catholic poet *par excellence*, who, with wide tolerance and rare largeness of heart, having brought on the stage a princely hero of a crusade in Don John of Austria, does not hesitate to give the honours of the play to a despised Morisco ; and to hold up as a model of knightly love and constancy after death, not the victor of Lepanto, but the vanquished of Galera.

In the "Love of Gomez Arias" Calderon takes a further step in favour of the proscribed race, by presenting to us in strong contrast the romantic generosity of a Moorish outlaw and the baseness of a Spanish cavalier. The ballad which rehearsed the disgraceful conduct of

¹ Sismondi.

Gomez is familiar to readers of *Don Quixote*; so that Calderon is not responsible for the invention of a story so discreditable to Spanish honour. The tale, whether true or false, commemorated by the ballad, refers to the first revolt of the Moors, provoked by the intolerance of Cardinal Ximenes, ten years after the capture of Granada. It is in that city, during a pause in the campaign, that Gomez Arias (a soldier of the *Don Juan* type) beguiles his leisure by making love to its governor's daughter, Beatrice. His suit prospers well, till he has to fly the city in consequence of a duel with a rival, Don Felix. His retreat is Cadiz; where he quickly seems to forget Beatrice for Dorothea, the fairest and noblest lady of the town. Such, as his discourse with Gines, his attendant, shows, is the constant practice of Gomez Arias; and he has an argument at once philosophical and ingenious by which he justifies it. Nature, he says, has constituted him a lover of perfection: now perfection is not to be found entire in any single woman, but various portions of it are presented, turn by turn, by different ladies;—what then so fit as that each in its turn should claim and receive his adoration? One of the perfections of poor Dorothea is (unhappily for herself) a simple and confiding disposition, which makes her only too easily fall a prey to her heartless admirer; who first prevails on her to elope with him, and then requites her trust by forsaking her, only three days later, in a ravine, while fast asleep. Cañeri, the bandit chieftain of a neighbouring Moorish fortress, is on the point of carrying the poor deserted lady off with him, when she is rescued by the Governor of Granada; who commits her to the charge of her rival, his daughter Beatrice. No student of Calderon

will marvel to find Gomez Arias hid in the governor's house at the very time of Dorothea's admission ; but the use made of this familiar incident is an unexpected one. Dorothea, suddenly confronted by her enraged father (come from Cadiz to Granada to invoke the governor's assistance), shrieks with terror. Gomez, ignorant of her presence, rushes forth, as he thinks, to the assistance of Beatrice. The light has been, as usual, extinguished ; and he acts, as he supposes, with his usual ingenuity, when, grasping the terrified lady's hand, he leads her forth outside the house and outside the city. The light of morning shows him his mistake. Beatrice is not with him. He avenges his disappointment on Dorothea ; who, at first delighted to find the man, whom she fondly calls husband, alive, after she had bewailed him as slain by those Moors, from whom she herself escaped with such difficulty, is confounded to hear Gomez ask her : “By what bad chance is it that

“Thee I find whom I abhor
In her place whom I adore ?”

In vain Gines asks his master to pity his victim ; and bids him “consider that she is a woman, and that she weeps.” Dorothea implores him at least to show some regard to his own honour, adding—

“ Ah ! my lord, there is no need
Thus to insult me ; courtesy
Should live on, though love should die.
Give, at least, this scanty meed
To repay my many sighs,
Tears so many shed for you.

GOMEZ.

Woman who dost weep and woo,
Who art thou ? what seek these cries ?
Nought I owe thee.

DOROTHEA.

But things two,—
Life and honour."

Gomez loses patience, and, after denying this just claim with a brutal "You followed me to please yourself ; what do I owe you for that ?" adds these terrible words, "I left you before when you were asleep ; to-day I shall leave you waking." "You shall kill me or take me with you," is Dorothea's rejoinder. "I shall do neither the one nor the other," answers Gomez ; and, advancing towards the Moorish fort, Benamegi, which overlooks the pass up which their flight has been directed, he calls its garrison to a parley. Cañeri appears on the wall, and is at once asked by Gomez if he will buy a slave of him. Recognising the beautiful lady who, shortly before, so narrowly escaped his hands, the Moorish leader gladly assents ; and goes to fetch great wealth in gold and jewels as her price. Then Dorothea makes a last effort to move her betrayer's flinty heart. "Monster, tiger, worse yet —man !" she says, "will not thunder-bolts strike thee for such a thought ? Sell *me*,—a freeborn woman (though made thy slave by love)—me, thy lady, nay more, thy spouse ? and to whom ? May the sun refuse thee its light ; air, earth, and water their gifts ! Mayst thou die a traitor's death !—Ah ! what said I ? Alas ! my lord, my love, my husband, I am thy slave, but a slave too faithful to be cast away. If I have displeased thee, kill

me, do not sell me. Let me die, and live happy in the sunlight, and may earth smile round thee as a garden ! ” Gomez remains silent. Dorothea tries appeals to his pride, proposes to retire into a convent, offers to further his suit with Beatrice, nay, even promises to become the slave of her favoured rival,—and all in vain. Equally in vain does she invoke memories of the past,—the ready credence which she gave to him, the high place she forsook for him, the home and honour which she lost for him, the noble father whose heart she wellnigh broke for his sake. Gomez still says nothing. And now Cañeri is seen hastening down the hill, and Dorothea pours forth her whole heart in this last passionate pleading :—

“ O my lord ! my sovereign master !
 Earthly heaven, sole good for me ! ¹
 To thy true self turn repenting,
 And let such repentance, seen
 In thee, change thy crime to merit.
 O persist not, lest from thee
 Sun and moon, and stars of heaven,
 All withhold their light serene ;
 Men and beasts, the birds, the fishes,
 All before thy coming flee ;
 Mountain, rock, and tree and forest,
 Give no shelter in thy need ;
 Fire and earth, the air, the water,
 To thee never comfort yield ;
 But, beholding act so hideous,
 All should turn against thee grieved,
 Seeing that, without relenting,
 Thou these words so oft canst hear :

¹ Assonants, *e* only.

*Knightly Gomez Arias,
Pity feel for me ;
Leave me not a captive
In Benamegi.”¹*

Gomez vouchsafes no single word of answer. Cañeri has by this time arrived with his treasures. He lays down the rubies and diamonds, and then turns to Dorothea, saying, “Christian, thou art mine once more.” “A woman is making restitution to me of the money of which many women have robbed me,” says Gomez, as he grasps the proffered wealth; “the slave is thine.” The Moors seize the unhappy Dorothea, in spite of her utmost resistance. Her piteous entreaty for at least a farewell embrace is refused, and she is dragged away, exclaiming—

“ Stars ! whence my ill fate proceeds,
Twinkling lights that view mine anguish,
Heavens that suffer such ill deed !
Ye, high mountains that behold it,
Birds, whose songs my plaints repeat,
Winds, that frighted stop to listen,
Trees whose branches shake with fear
Harkening to my mournful sobbing,
Help me in my woful need !
And since men refuse me pity,
Oh, be kind and pity me ;
*For they lead me captive
To Benamegi.”*

It was at this point of the action that a Spanish soldier, on guard at the Madrid theatre, rushed forward, sword in hand, on to the stage to rescue the noble

¹ These words are the refrain of the old ballad. Dorothea has pronounced them once already, and they are again repeated.

Spanish lady from slavery to the infidel. No better witness need be asked for to the vigour and pathos which Calderon has here put forth.

His villainous hero is not long in betaking himself once more to Granada. Finding Beatrice acquainted with his having carried away Dorothea from Cadiz, he boldly avows the fact ; pretending that he only did so to spite his true lady love, of whom he was for the moment jealous. But he adds that he soon hated and left her ; and that such was his horror at finding that he had carried her away by mistake a second time, that he has sold her to the Moor, and now lays her price before her rival's feet. After this almost inconceivable display of his baseness, he coolly asks—

“Are your doubts now satisfied ?

BEATRICE.

Yes ; and wisdom gained besides.
Since the ill I see at last
That to trap me ready lay,
Thine excuse I fling away,
But this wisdom I hold fast.
Slain by love, a pale corpse lies
That poor lady ; and the sight
Brings thy traitorous heart to light—
Makes me loathe thy flatteries.
Stiff and cold before mine eyes
Thy disgraced love moves my heart,
And her warnings make me start ;
For, though mute, those white lips say—
‘Fly, or else behold one day
In thy state my counterpart.’
If thus full her piteous fate
Is of warnings gravely given,

When the thunder peals from heaven
 Why should I the bolt await ?
 Since such spectre, hovering late
 O'er love's ashes, said e'en now,
 'I, by lover's treacherous vow,
 Of mine all have been beguiled,—
 I, an honoured father's child,
 Once as prosperous as thou,—
 Must I not believe ? And so
 Take thy folly's punishment,
 For who proves that thine intent
 Is not, if with thee I go,
 Soon to drown me in like woe ?
 While I stand before thee free,
 From thy snare I haste to flee ;
 Lest those warning words should end
 Thus, while I no hearing lend,—
 'As I am, so thou shalt be.'"

(Exit.)

This farewell is a final one. Beatrice, convinced of the imprudence of her own choice, submits to her father's will, and accepts the husband he has designed for her—thus defeating her wicked suitor's prediction on her departure :—

"No need yet for doubt and sorrow ;
 I, whatever she may say,
 Will get speech with her to-day,
 And may sell *her* too to-morrow."

The avenger of his misdeeds is approaching. The next scene shows us the entrance, with all befitting martial pomp, of Queen Isabella¹ into her beautiful

¹ It was, in truth, her husband, King Ferdinand, who suppressed the revolt in question ; but Calderon has preferred his queen's more poetic figure, and placed her as a more suitable champion to defend his wronged heroine.

and well-loved conquest, Granada. She salutes the rivers that water its plain, the snow-crowned mountains that tower above it, as one come to protect them against relapsing into the infidel's hands. But the beat of drums, and the loud plaudits which follow the queen's harangue, are hushed when an aged nobleman steps forward and flings himself as a suppliant at her feet. It is Dorothea's father, Don Luis, come to ask for justice against Gomez, which Isabella, on hearing his sad story, readily grants; ordering a price to be set on the traitor's head, and a double reward if he can be taken alive. She next directs an instantaneous advance on Benamegi. Cañeri, meantime, has treated his captive well; respectfully awaiting her consent to change her religion and become his wife. Nothing, in fact, can be more clearly marked than the superiority in all chivalric feeling of the purchaser of Dorothea to her heartless seller. It comes out very strongly in a scene, near the end of the play, within the walls of Cañeri's fortress. There Dorothea's declaration that she would die a thousand times rather than renounce her faith, only calls forth regret, not indignation, from the brave Moor. Her profound sadness awakens his pity; and he is the first to impose silence on his musicians, when (being asked to divert her with a song) they begin their newest ballad,—

“ Knightly Gomez Arias,
Pity feel for me;
Young and very lonely,
New to misery;”

and make Dorothea burst into tears, and exclaim, like Gretchen in “Faust,” “Have they made ballads already of my story?” But the beat of drums is heard

outside ; the music ceases, and Cañeri hastens forth to defend his fortress. He is mortally wounded in fight with Don Luis ; and expires at the feet of Queen Isabella. Meantime Dorothea, who has armed the Christian captives and opened the gates to the queen, is restored by her to her father, and immediately after to her forfeited station and honour. For the proclamation has taken speedy effect, and the guilty Gomez, brought captive into Isabella's presence, is at once by her commanded to acknowledge Dorothea as his wife. He does so readily, with a prayer for her forgiveness of the past. This is immediately accorded,—and even her father stands prepared to accept, for the sake of what fools might call honour, this vilest of sons-in-law. No reader of "Measure for Measure" could envy Mariana the hand of Angelo ; but bad and base as is Angelo, his baseness is not so irretrievable, his badness so irreclaimable, as is that of Gomez. Calderon, little scrupulous as he often shows himself in such matters,¹ felt it impossible to leave his lovely Dorothea in such evil hands ; and so he makes his queen act here with more wise sternness than the Duke who pardons Angelo at his new-made wife's intercession. "You," she says, "Don Luis, have received satisfaction for the injured honour of your house ; now comes my turn. Call the executioner ; cut off this man's head forthwith; and expose it on the ramparts of the town where he sold his spouse to the infidel." Dorothea pleads in vain for her wicked bridegroom's life. "No door must be left open for the pardon of crimes like this," says the just Isabella ; and so the play concludes.

¹ See his "Nothing like Silence."

It is this admirable piece of poetical justice at its end which, even more than its interesting story, its singularly pleasing heroine—so well contrasted, too, with the spirited Beatrice—its deep pathos, its generous acknowledgment of Moorish virtues, and its fine historical background, makes “*La Niña de Gomez Arias*” one of Calderon’s best plays.

CHAPTER X.

THE *AUTOS* OF CALDERON.

THE Sacramental Act was the most national and characteristic effort of the Spanish drama during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its form was that of a short sacred play, preceded by a long prologue spoken by several actors : its object, the glorification of the doctrine of transubstantiation ; its time, the festival of Corpus Christi. The actors who were to perform in it followed the gorgeous procession, usual on that day, in their ornamental cars ; and performed, after the religious ceremonies were over, in the open air, before the multitudes who crowded the great square of some vast city, or before the humbler concourse of rustics on some village green. Lope de Vega left the entertainment even more popular than he found it ; and in his four hundred *autos* (only thirteen of which survive) laid down the lines on which Calderon was afterwards to plan and raise that majestic temple which German and Spaniard, northern and southern, Protestant and Romanist, have alike combined to praise for its vast and harmonious proportions, its inexhaustible riches of decoration, and its solemn and impressive grandeur of design. “ He who first treads

within the magic circle of these poems," says Schack, "feels himself breathed on by a strange spirit, and beholds another heaven outspread over another earth; depths of dizzy thought open before him, enigmatical figures rise from the abyss, and the dark red flames of mysticism shine into the mysterious fountain from which all things flow. But the clouds disappear, and we see ourselves above the limits of the terrestrial, beyond the bounds of space and time; for we have been lifted up into the kingdom of the immeasurable and the eternal. . . . A gigantic cathedral of spiritual architecture receives us; on the altar, surrounded by ineffable light, the mystery of the Trinity is enthroned; a dazzling splendour of rays, which human sense can scarcely endure, spreads out and illuminates the mighty pillared vault with unspeakable glory; here all beings are lost in the contemplation of the Eternal, and look with astonished eyes on the unfathomable depth of divine love, while the whole creation joins together in one joyful chorus." To such competent (though it may be partial) judges, scholastic theology has seemed in Calderon's hands to lose its dryness, and allegory its frigidity. Lorinser (translator of these *autos* into German) claims for Calderon the merit of having given a "true, and not merely an apparent living existence to his allegorical personages;" while Eichendorff says very beautifully, after reminding us how absolute beauty can only reveal itself to us under earthly images, and how therefore all genuine poetry is, properly speaking, symbolical: "We feel that under the terrestrial veil lies silent and asleep the unfathomable song which is the voice of all things; but Calderon speaks the magic words, and the world begins

to sing." To these initiated listeners, the seventy-three *autos* which have come down to us are Calderon's surest title to immortality. They feel (to borrow the words of Schlegel, the greatest dramatic critic of Germany) that "it is on religious themes that the mind of Calderon is most distinctly expressed. Love he paints merely in its most general features ; he but speaks its technical poetical language. Religion is his peculiar love, the heart of his heart. For religion alone he excites the most overpowering emotions, which penetrate into the inmost recesses of the soul ; and by this deep religious enthusiasm exhibits the universe, as it were, under an allegorical representation in the purple flames of love."

Now the dramas which have excited this warm and sympathetic admiration, presuppose on the part of their audience a great knowledge of Scripture and of its received mystic interpretation, and an exact acquaintance with the doctrines of their Church, as fixed by the Council of Trent. They require for their enjoyment a readiness to penetrate the allegoric meaning of each character which they present. Above all things, they need a strong and unquestioning belief in the great truths they exhibit in concrete form ; for such a belief can alone enable the beholder to shudder at their representation of man's Fall, and to rejoice with thrilling ecstasy as they figure to him man's Redemption. In fact, they imparted to the pious citizen of Madrid or Toledo the same delight which the 'Pilgrim's Progress' still sheds round the English fireside. The rationalist acknowledges them, and it, to be works of genius, and derives pleasure from its contemplation ; but his satisfaction only arises from the way in which their theme

is handled, and not from the theme itself. But the Christian can enjoy both—an enjoyment from which (especially in some of Calderon's inferior *autos*) superstitions alien to the faith which owns Nicene, not Tridentine, authority must detract something; but which in the grandest *autos* finds little to disturb it.

The subject of the *auto* being essentially always the same, it amazes the mind to see with what ingenuity the great Spanish dramatists have succeeded in approaching it from the most various sides. It is here that Calderon especially has displayed his great fertility of invention. Some of his *autos* are serious parodies of his own secular drama, as “Life’s a Dream” and “The Painter of his own Dishonour;” in which last the Divine artist who appears disguised in our flesh to behold and repair His own ruined work is very nobly set forth. We have already said something of another division,—those *autos* which have classical titles; such as “The true God Pan,” or “Orpheus, the Vanquisher of Hades.” There is a third class which contains some of Calderon’s best, and also many of his worst, *autos*—namely, that formed of dramas suggested by contemporary events. One of these celebrates Queen Christina of Sweden’s reconciliation with the Romish Church; another the opening of a hospital at Madrid; two more, a hunting-party of Philip the Fourth’s, and the enlargement and adornment of his palace of the Retiro; again, one is in honour of his second marriage. The nearest analogy to such dramas, viewed as religious lessons, in our own day, will be found in well-intended tracts designed to draw spiritual teaching from public events; such as the Great Exhibition or the marriage of the Prince of Wales. It need

not be said that such methods of popular instruction sometimes (most undesignedly) provoke ludicrous ideas ; and it is to this class of Spanish sacred dramas that the strictures of some foreign critics seem most applicable.

A fourth division of Calderon's *autos* is that founded on historical events, as the conversion of Constantine, the life of St Ferdinand, and the defence of Almudena. A fifth, and much more numerous, set of *autos* are derived from the Bible. In them the great typical figures of the Old Testament are set forth to foreshadow our Divine Lord ; and its holy women, His Virgin Mother. In them His parables are enacted by suitable personages ; and His miracles are so represented as to bring forth all manner of symbolic meanings.

Two *autos* of Calderon form a class by themselves, since they have no human actors. They are "The Matrimonial Dispute" (of which more anon), and "Humility crowned," taken from Jotham's fable of the trees. "In this play," says Pedroso, "those who saw two actors in their strange disguise of boughs and foliage, were obliged to project themselves into the following series of interpretations : these men represent the thorn and the laurel, shrubs that symbolise Judaism and Paganism, which are themselves allegorical figures of the two nations that assisted at the passion of Christ." All the characters employed are of the same description ; and yet both these dramatised fables, especially the former, are interesting.

The seventh and last section of these *autos* is that formed by ethical allegories, such as "There is no Fortune but God," and "The great Theatre of the World." It is in *autos* like these that Calderon, without ceasing to be a great poet, stands forth as a great moral teacher ;

preaching sermons of which Massillon might have been proud,—as in his mystic *autos* we seem to hear once more the long silent voice of the great preacher, Luis de Granada. We shall not offer our readers specimens of each of these classes, limited space warning us to confine ourselves to the acknowledged masterpieces.

One of these, in Lorinser's opinion, is a drama of our fifth class, “Belshazzar's Feast;” which yet was one of Calderon's earliest *autos*, having been probably composed about 1638. In it Belshazzar is the true historical personage so named in the Book of Daniel; but he is likewise, from his profanation of the vessels of the temple, the type of the unworthy communicant, whose doom his fate foreshadows. Similarly, Daniel is a real prophet in this *auto*; but (agreeably to the meaning of his Hebrew name) he also represents the judgment of God, and has therefore under his control the allegoric form of Death—who (as Lorinser remarks) is almost the chief actor in the piece. The rival sultanas, *Idolatry* and *Vanity*, who beguile the unhappy king to his ruin, though purely allegoric personages, are represented with all the traits of Eastern beauties; while the buffoon of the piece (for even *autos* have their buffoons) is man's Thought, which, being here the thought of Belshazzar, is foolishness.

The pride, which is hurrying the monarch to his destruction, displays itself by the determination which he expresses, to rebuild the Tower of Babel; introduced by a narrative of its first construction and of the Deluge which preceded it, much of which is in a singularly sublime strain of poetry. Daniel's warnings to him are unheeded; and the seer is left alone, sadly asking who can be found to defend God's injured honour, when a voice

replies, "I will," and Death enters. The prophet himself starts terrified, and asks what this awful shape, never seen by him before, can be. The answer is, "The child of envy and of sin, but yet the executioner of God's judgments, and therefore not terrible to His servants"—

" Yet 'tis no marvel thou shouldst tremble, no,
E'en wert thou God Himself, beholding me ;
Since, when of the fair Rose of Jericho
'Mid lilies the Carnation's Birth shall be,
The human part of very God shall know
Fear at my sight ; the stars their light shall see
Bedimmed, the moon her face, his orb the sun,
When by my hand that Captive great is won.

The proudest tower that the despairing winds
Assail no more, but flatteringly caress,
The wall so safe that the death-engine finds
No way within its guarded close to press,
My hand resistless all to powder grinds,
My foot treads down to dust and lowliness :
And if, I say, 'tis thus with wall and tower,
How shall the lowly hut withstand my power ?

Beauty and genius, force of human might,
Resist in vain when once my voice is heard ;
All living men, soon as they saw the light,
Passed unto me to die one day their word.

I will burn Nimrod's fields ; drive terror-stirred
Proud Babel's nations into speedy flight.

I will bring over Shinar's plains a flood,
Dyeing them red in King Belshazzar's blood."

Commanded to stay the execution, and to warn so that, if possible, Belshazzar may repent and be saved. Death goes against his will on this merciful errand ; con-

straining the yet more unwilling Thought to be his companion. The heedless king starts at the ghastly vision, which remains scarcely noticed by the two gay queens. "Who art thou, voiceless, bodiless phantom?" asks Belshazzar; "how camest thou in hither?"

DEATH.

"If his light the bright sun throws
On the earth's face, I am shadow ;
If he as the world's life glows,
I am the world's death ; and thus
I can go where'er he goes,
Since to lights and shadows space
Equally possession owes."—(M.)

"What wouldst thou?" gasps out the king. "I am a creditor of thine," is the answer—"here is the memorandum of the debt;" and leaving in his hand a paper, which represents the remembrance of death long lost by Belshazzar, the dread visitant departs. For a short time the thoughtless youth pores over it with terror; then he allows Vanity to snatch it from his hand, and to lull him to sleep with her song. While he slumbers, Death steals in once more; and, marvelling to see his own image, sleep, go on warning men without being heeded by any, says—

"Man for rest to slumber flies,
Ah, great God ! heed never taking
How, by sleeping and by waking,
He each day is born and dies ;
How a living corpse he lies
Daily, and surrendereth
Up his life to a brief death,
Never what his rest is heeding ;
How a lesson Death stands reading
Thus to all who draw life's breath."

His arm (raised to smite the sleeper) is once more arrested by Daniel. Little, however, does Belshazzar profit by the respite, or by the warning conveyed to him in a vision. Idolatry spreads for him the fatal table, the sacred vessels are profaned there, and Death enters in disguise among the attendants, to present to him the cup which is the seal of his transgressions. So soon as the king has quaffed it to an idol's praise, a loud thunder-clap is heard, the three mystic words of condemnation are revealed in fire and interpreted by Daniel ; and now at last Death is seen advancing, and carries off his unresisting prey.

This is the finest of the *autos* on Old Testament subjects. Those which are taken from the New Testament tread on yet holier ground, and (though most reverent in intention) may shock, at least at first sight, by their boldness. In them the Redeemer of mankind is presented, either in His own person casting the devil out of his ancient possession, Man, and bidding human nature (figured by the Cripple at Bethesda's pool) arise and walk, or else disguised as the prominent figure in one of His own parables. One of these *autos* shows Him as the sower of the good seed ; another as the Samaritan coming to aid the traveller whom three bandits (the World, the Flesh, and the Devil) have wounded and left for dead ; a third displays His entrance into the Vineyard, amid the transitory hosannas of the wicked husbandmen, whence He is to be cast out by them and slain.

One of the finest of these is taken from the parable of the Marriage of the King's Son, and bears the name of "The Called and the Chosen." In it (as in some degree always in these *autos*) events are not conceived of chrono-

logically, but grouped together as concrete manifestations of spiritual truth ; and the Incarnation is seen affecting the centuries which went before it, as well as all the ages that are to come.

At its opening two faithful servants of the great King implore Him to give heed to the prayers of His banished subjects. The two petitioners are Isaiah and Daniel ; their prayer is, that the great palace doors may open, and from its hidden recesses send forth their promised Ruler, the King's Son. Sad voices chant from within—

“ Mercy to us, O Lord,
Thy banished, now afford ;
By our long tears be won,
And send us now Thy Son !
Thy mercy show us, Lord ! ”

The prayer is heard. The instant coming of the Prince with His royal bride, the Church, is proclaimed ; and they are seen first standing on the deck of a mystic ship, then landing, while sweet voices sing—

“ Ship, by which to earth is given
Pearl whose worth is infinite ;
Chariot, that dost earth unite
(Though so far apart) with heaven,—
Come to land, here stay thy flight,
Here thy mystery hid release ;
Since, to make the war to cease,
'Twixt our king and us thou fliest.

CHORUS.

Glory to God be in the highest,
And to man on earth be peace ! ”

While the prophets are inviting the kings of the earth to the great marriage-feast, the royal Bridegroom and

His spouse discourse in strains borrowed from the Song of Songs :—

THE PRINCE.

“ Loved spouse divine, whose light
 Makes other light to turn to dimmest shade,
 Yea, day itself to night,
 So that the sun, by thee a beggar made,
 Might of thy beauty’s flower
 Seek radiance fair with which his stars to dower !

THE SPOUSE.

Lover and lord in one,
 Whose grace for chill December’s frost can weave
 The pomps of April’s sun,
 Bidding him roses at thine hand receive,
 Which he thy feet before
 Lays, where (though cold his breath) they bloom the more !

THE PRINCE.

Never can roe, with wound
 Whence with the blood the life begins to flow,
 Pursue the murmuring sound
 Of crystal fountains eager, as I go
 To seek thy tenderness,
 Feeling of love’s keen dart the sweet distress.

THE SPOUSE.

The lamb, than snow more white,
 Enamoured of its tender shepherd’s care,
 Runs not o’er sward so light,
 To reach his arms, and rest all panting there,
 As I, by love oppressed,
 Fly swifter than the wind to gain thy breast.”¹

¹ “ Llamados y Escogidos.”

Then Truth appears with the sad tidings of her rejected mission and the murder of the prophets. The King, upon this, sends forth to invite the poor, in place of the great ones of the earth. The voice cries in the wilderness, the twelve apostles proclaim the summons. Paganism repents, and (following the guidance of a star) takes his place at the banquet. Only the Synagogue refuses,—sending Falsehood, disguised, to steal the heavenly food for her. But this Judas is detected by his want of the wedding-garment, and expelled from the sacred feast at which the Church receives the troth-plight of her Lord; about to go forth from thence to His glorious triumph through suffering.

These instances of Calderon's symbolic treatment of Scripture will show his clear insight into its inexhaustible fulness of meaning, and his belief in its infinite variety of applications to man's need and man's sin, however variously manifested.

That sin and its attendant misery had deeply touched our poet's heart. Several of his finest *autos* take for their theme its origin in the fall of Adam; and are each a miniature 'Paradise Lost.'

In one of these, "The Poison and its Antidote," Human Nature appears a sovereign princess, mighty in her original innocence, to receive the gifts and homage of her vassals, the Four Seasons:—

WINTER.

" If, by heat of noon-tide burning,
Thee, my queen, I, tired, behold,
Here is water, clear and cold,
Its fierce flame to coolness turning.

SPRING.

Of my flowers that fairest are
I have twined this wreath for thee ;
Place them on thy brow, to be
Flowers no more, but each a star.

SUMMER.

I have plucked these ears of wheat
To bestow on thee, who art
The true Ceres of my heart.

AUTUMN.

I these fruits before thy feet
Lay, rejoice thou in their beauty,
Of their riches freely eat.

DEATH.

I have found occasion meet,
Vassal, too, to pay my duty."

He presents the fatal apple. Vainly the attendant, Innocence, warns the Princess not to eat of it. Her mistress tastes it, and then, maddened by its deadly poison, turns to the Seasons who are dancing around her, and bids their song cease :—

PRINCESS.

"Cease, sweet accents ! cease to sing,
Let your voices sound no more,
Though they gently chained before
Winds that hearkened wondering.
Wake no more on sounding string
Notes harmonious ; but in guise
Other (ah, what pains ! what sighs !)
In song's stead, now celebrate,
With sad tears, with mournful state,
Of my death the obsequies.

.

WINTER.

Calm thee : what affrights thee so ?

PRINCESS.

That thou art not, as of old,
My true vassal, winter cold ;
Pass, nor freeze me with thy snow.

SPRING.

All such fears for baseless know ;
Robe thee with thy charms divine,
Let the pink, the rose combine,
Once again to crown thee.

PRINCESS.

Nay ;

Pass by quickly, spring-tide gay,—
Thorns lurk in those flowers of thine.

SUMMER.

Whence arise these terrors chill ?

PRINCESS.

From beholding thee too nigh,
Burning summer ; hasten by,
Lest thy fierce rays scorch and kill.

AUTUMN.

If December, August, still
Even May, by gifts offend,
Dry thine eyes and own a friend
In me.

PRINCESS.

Deadly is thy sight ;
Pass, dread autumnin, with swift flight,
For to death thy sweet fruits tend.

INNOCENCE.

All the seasons while they last
 Cause her woe and weariness ;
 What in them was soft caress
 Now is changed to harmful blast.
 All of them to hasten past
 With their gifts she asks, not knowing
 That thus short her life is growing ;
 That to-morrow she must moan
 For a yesterday then gone,
 Now to-day unheeded going.

PRINCESS.

Beauteous sun ! that so much light
 Didst but yesterday bestow,
 Why to-day thy brilliant glow
 Dost thou hide in pale, sad night ?
 Thou, night's torch, too, quivering white,
 Moon, inconstant now I see ;
 For thy radiance lighted me
 Yesterday with crescent face ;
 But thy wane comes on apace
 Ere thy brightness full could be.
 Flowers that yestreen flourished gay,
 White and purple, to surprise
 As with sparkling flames mine eyes,
 Why are thorns your gifts to-day ?
 Beasts, that yesterday would pay
 Thousand courtesies unto me,
 Standing still with love to view me—
 All your wrathful threats suspending,
 Flattering on my steps attending,
 Why now seek ye to undo me ?
 Birds, that both at eve and morn
 Yesterday sweet music gave,
 Singing cheerful songs or grave,
 Whence these boding notes forlorn ?”¹

¹ “ El Veneno y la Triaca.”

Here the pathos is deep. The Princess appears to the beholder as a real person. He shudders at the treachery of which she is the object; he compassionates the anguish with which she sees all nature turning against her; he longs for the approach of the Great Physician who is to bring the remedy, and rejoices when the Stranger from the far country comes with the healing waters and the heavenly food which effect the cure. These sorrows are, after all, my own,—this fable is told of me, is the deeper reflection meant to follow; but at first his whole attention is absorbed by the grief so well represented.

In the “Poison and its Antidote,” the Four Seasons are the pitying and sympathising friends of Man, little as their blandishments can avail to divert his deep-seated sorrow. In “Man’s Provisions,” they assume at first a sterner aspect. Adam, expelled from Paradise, comes to beg food from them, and each replies that they are now forbidden to give him anything. He must earn what he needs by his labour. Yet from each he hears, besides, a hopeful prophecy. Spring looks forward to the Annunciation, which is to glorify March with the fairest of her flowers; and, while handing to Adam the spade which he is to toil with, sings—

“ Ah ! when shall this grove grow bright,
Seeing, in its smiling bower,
All at once unite
Red carnation’s glowing flower
And the lily’s white ? ”

An angelic voice responds, and Gabriel appears, bearing the lily, to chant—

“ Hail, thou sacred garden-close,
 Which with beauteous, radiant spring,
 One day shalt dispose
 Jasmine flow’rets forth to bring,
 Purpled like the rose ! ”

Adam afterwards prefers his petition to Summer. He, like his sister Spring, can bestow no free gift upon him ; so he lends him a sickle with which to reap, and bids him hope for golden grain, when a morning star shall shine to make June resplendent. Voices from within are heard, which join Summer in singing—

“ Morning star ! hail dawn’s bright gem,
 Come our tide of woe and pains
 Now, at last, to stem !
 Ripen ’neath his light your grains,
 Fields of Bethlehem ! ”

St John the Baptist appears in answer to this invitation, chanting—

“ Mortals ! joy my face to see,
 For the dawn cannot be far
 (Herald of the sun to be)
 When the morning star
 Bids the darkness flee.
 Since to aid thee now I shine,
 To prepare His way
 Sent, with gleaming ray—
 Life, soul, being, all be thine,
 At His coming feet to lay.”

In like manner Autumn, with his reaping-hook, points to the cluster of rich grapes which a September sun shall yet ripen for Adam’s comfort on the birthday of the Virgin. Then Winter appears as an aged Shepherd to give him a crook, saying, as he enters—

“ Since now shrinks the flock
 From the bitter cold,
 Come, day long foretold !
 When the sun each plain and rock
 Shall with joy behold.

ADAM.

What fair splendours of the morn,
 Winter, in a night of thine
 Canst thou promise me shall shine ?

WINTER.

Those which out of darkness born,
 Come to glad the world with beams,
 When the Sun¹ with purest light
 Shows His face at mid of night,
 And the star² at noon-tide gleams.

ADAM.

When shall comfort such have birth ?

WINTER.

When thou creatures fair descriest,
 Singing, Glory in the highest
 Unto God, and peace on earth.”³

It is only one step beyond symbolic representations like the foregoing, to dispense with human personages altogether. Calderon takes it in his “ Matrimonial Dispute,” a finely-conceived *auto* in the region of pure fable ; which, as it was left unfinished by its author, we may imagine to have furnished the occupation of some of the latest weeks of his life. In it the ill-matched couple are

¹ Christ.

² The star of the wise men.

³ “ Los Alimentos del Hombre.”

the Body and the Soul of man—the offspring of their union, his Life; their friends, Understanding and Memory; their attendants, the Will and the five Senses; their foes, Sin and Death.

The *auto* begins by displaying the Body, with its five Senses at its feet; slumbering, but stirred by a presage of life. A throne awaits its coming spouse, the future ruler of the senses; and, resplendent with beauty, the Soul comes down from heaven to fill it. But she comes weeping at her banishment from her native country, and crying—

“ Beauteous land where I was born,
Force from thee to earth now sends me ;
But, where'er I go, attends me
Light that hailed my life's first morn,
Changeless, though I roam forlorn.
Me for endless life God wrought,
Though He made me out of nought.
Me, to spouse who waits me here,
I protest 'tis force has brought.
I protest that, prisonèd,
While I in the body lie,
I, to my true home to fly,
Wings each hour shall long to spread.”

As the Soul draws near to the Body, she falls into the arms of Sin; as, in like manner, does the Body (wakened by her approach) into those of Death. With such ominous auspices they join hands. Life, with his lighted torch, appears as the fruit of their union.

But the ill-assorted pair cannot long agree. The Body despises the sacramental food which is the Soul's supreme joy; and wastes her dowry of virtues and graces. The

Soul threatens to get her original protest against their union prosecuted to a divorce ; but the Body disbelieves and disregards her warning, listening instead to Sin's siren voice, who is heard singing—

“ Man, while yet thy star shines bright,
 Let death’s thought away be thrown ;
 For thy life is life alone
 While as yet its joys delight.

BODY.

True : nor is my heart afraid,
 Thinking life is but a flower
 Budding in the morning hour,
 Vanishing by evening’s shade.
 No ; since brief our term is made,
 Let this short life joy supply,
 Ere from out our hand it fly.
 Let us each desire obey,
 Let us eat and drink to-day,
 For to-morrow we must die.

MEMORY.

Man, awake ! nor careless fall
 Thus from thought ; instead, take heed,
 For death is not death indeed
 Till by it man loses all.”

The Body, implored by the Soul to listen to this last counsellor, hesitates ; but finally decides for the pagan *carpe diem*, and Pleasure is proclaimed his conqueror. “ Not mine,” cries the justly indignant Soul ; and proceeds to demand of the supreme judge her separation from her unworthy spouse. She fortifies her demand by an appeal to those prophets and to those doctors of the

Church who have called the body a prison, and implored deliverance from it. Life grows faint at her voice. The Body, seeing this, trembles, and promises amendment if the Soul will only recall her petition. Too late : the judge has received it, and is already proceeding to give his award ; and scarcely has the Body had time to lodge his plea for a separation—at the worst temporary—when Death, torch in hand, comes in to notify the sentence. Then (like a dramatic version of Jeremy Taylor's description of death's approach) Life's flame burns dim, and the senses begin to fail, as the decree is read which sequestrates the Soul from the Body during the process of the suit. The Body has just had time to make its last confession when the torch is extinguished, Life vanishes, and the Body remains Death's prisoner in the dark caverns of the earth. Meantime the Soul, departing with her attendants, Will, Memory, and Understanding, has been restored (after brief purgatorial suffering) to her throne above, where the great Judge bids her await, at His second advent, a reunion, under better auspices, with her ancient spouse ; whose voice meantime ascends from his prison-house with words like those which of old sounded amid the hills of Edom :—

“ Here, my last great change expecting,
I, O Lord, in hope remain ;
Trusting, on that day tremendous,
When this marriage-suit again
Thou, revising, shalt give sentence,
My lost consort to regain
At Thine hands, oh great Decree,
Then to all of joy or pain ! ”¹

¹ “ El Pleyto Matrimonial.”

This *auto*, no doubt, is here and there as an allegory imperfect ; for it attributes to the Body the guilt of actions for which, after all, the Soul must have been responsible. But the power with which things are in it transformed into persons is marvellous ; since we listen to the Soul's complaints of her wrongs and her degradation as if we were hearing the sorrow of some lofty tragic heroine. Nor can its picture of the consternation of all man's powers at the approach of "the last summoner" easily be surpassed.

C H A P T E R X I.

HIS ETHICAL *AUTOS*.

WE now come to our last division of Calderon's *autos*—those which describe man's daily life as seen by an angel's eye. The deep moral lesson which one of them—"There is no Fortune but God"—is intended to teach, is conveyed in a most ingenious manner. It is opened by the Demon; who bids Malice delude men into forgetting God's continual overruling providence by teaching them to ascribe all events to an imaginary deity called Fortune. The designed victims of this imposture are seen slumbering as they await the call to life. Distributive Justice appears, to shake with her wand the branches of the great Tree of Life under which they sleep; on which hang the various ensigns of the condition assigned to each. "Awake to life!" she cries, "mortals, awake! to receive each the state allotted to you by God; thank Him for His gifts, but without exultation or sadness,—for, till he dies, no man is truly either happy or unhappy."

"In those stations I ordain
You shall all men equal see;
Since no station bad can be
If man well its part sustain.

Whether full of joy or pain,
 Seek no other lot to take ;
 All men equal entrance make,
 Exit like, in birth and death.
 Mortals ! wake to draw life's breath !
 Unto life awake ! awake !”

As the branches are shaken, a crown and sceptre fall from them on one destined to be King ; and he starts up, asking—

“ What is this that falls on me ?
 Weight that nowise little seems
 Has awakened me from dreams
 That I dreamed half wakingly.
 Can it crown and sceptre be ?
 Mine was birth in happy hour ;
 For it sets within my power,
 Toiling not, so great a thing.
 What to be am I born ?

DEMON.

King !

THE KING.

Who willed that ?

MALICE.

“ Tis Fortune's dower.”

She tells the like lie to the man for whom falls the labourer's mattock ; to the Beauty, so appointed by the mirror ; to the Soldier, at whose feet drops the sword ; to the Student, provided with a book ; and to the Beggar, who has nothing given him but a staff. All believe the falsehood. All ascribe the gifts of God to Fortune, and are on the point of setting off to follow her, when the

student sees a cross fall from the tree, and shows it to the rest.

STUDENT.

“Wait ; one gift amongst us thrown,
As for all, lies as it fell ;
And no sign appears to tell
Which should have it for his own.

ALL.

What gift is it ? make it known.

STUDENT.

’Tis a Cross, if right I see.

KING.

Then it was not meant for me,
Since for empire I was born,
Not to suffer pain or scorn.

BEAUTY.

Mine that Cross can never be,
Since my beauty to maintain
And enjoy, by fears unchilled,
Is for me what Fortune willed.

LABOURER.

I, too, say, ‘Not mine ;’ my pain,
Sweat and toil oft spent in vain,
Are a Cross enough to bear.

BEGGAR.

Sorrow and the anxious care
Caused by poverty, my lot,
Other source of woe need not :
Hunger, thirst, that hourly wear,—
If nought else, to beg each day,—
Make for me sufficient Cross.

SOLDIER.

Born to risk of life the loss,
I need seek none.

STUDENT.

To essay
Study's steep and toilsome way,
As I do, is cross enow.

ALL.

Then, if all who live must bow
'Neath a cross from birth their own,
Whom to load was this one thrown?"

Justice enters and answers the question. The cross is offered to all—to be forced on none—and will prove a blessing to those who willingly take it up.

"To his lot let each man add it ;
Once by this great staff supported,¹
He shall see that, with like sweetness,
It can prop the saddest mourner,
And uphold the noblest victor.
Come, then, start not back in horror
At the red enamels, tinging
Where one line the other crosses,
For on no man weighs this burden
Heavier than can bear his shoulder.

.
Therefore come, haste quickly hither,
Thou of men the earthly sovereign ;
Join this stem of mystic beauty
To the laurel-bough that crowns thee.
.

¹ Assonants in *o, e.*

Beauty, thou, ere age come blasting
With sere wind thy garden's flow'rets,
Hide thee 'neath this tree's safe shelter
From the breath of the devourer."

"Time for that when I am old," replies the Beauty ; "let me now enjoy the gifts of my mistress, Fortune." "My business at present lies with the Student and with the Soldier," answers the King, "and my pleasure in adoring the Beauty. I know nothing of this deity on whose behalf you claim me ; I owe all to Fortune." Sword and Gown make each a like answer. The Labourer, and the Beggar even, prefer to spend their time in complaining of their bad fortune, to praying heaven to make them happier. And thus all go on pursuing Evil and refusing Good,—for, in a scuffle, these two have exchanged cloaks, and few are wise enough to detect evil under the specious appearance of good, or not to shun good when it draws near to them disguised as evil. Presently the Beauty is seen, receiving the King's homage, seated in a garden among blossoms fair as herself. The Labourer bears fruit and flowers to present to her ; the Soldier enters with sound of drum to give his master crowns to lay at her feet. As he does so, he praises Fortune as the author of his victories. "Right," says the King ; "let us constitute this garden her temple, and offer our thanks to that mighty goddess." Dance and song are begun in Fortune's honour ; and continued till a startling accident puts an end to them. The Beauty suddenly disappears from view. She has fallen into a dark pit ; which the King and his attendants try vainly to fathom with the insignia of their stations. From its depth rises a hideous skeleton, grasped by which the King sees his sceptre, and the

general his truncheon. Then begins a touching lament over the vanished Beauty and her perished charms.

THE KING.

“ In such grief and such distress
How am I the tale to tell,
That 'twas here the bright day fell,
Now dark night from hence doth press ?
She, whose perfect loveliness
My vain heart did so adore,
Hideous now, is dust, nought more :
Who so foolish, as to know
This, and still to beauty bow—
Still kneel down king's throne before !

LABOURER.

That green tree, whose flowery crown
Lent us shade through many Mays,
That fair verdure that sent rays,
Bright as flamelets darting down,
Lightless, lifeless, has turned brown,
And, affrighted and dismayed,
We must own it useless shade :—
Yet, who loves, nor thinks it meet
Both to warm him in this heat,
And 'neath boughs like these be laid ?

BEGGAR.

That rich, beauteous vase of gold,
That, through worth of rarest price,
High-born spirit could suffice
In its trusty charge to hold—
Now has lost its goodness old.
Now the golden vase contains

Poison that its beauty stains :—
Who so mad as to desire
With the poison to acquire
All that treasure for his pains ?

SOLDIER.

Now that life, whose flowery pride
By the world was idolized,
Smoke, dust, wind, as nought is prized,
Dimmed its light, its verdure dried ;
As his very faintest sighed
Death upon it, turned it straight
Into ashes ; woeful fate !—
How forget that we must die
Then ? still prize this life, nor nigh
Trembling see stern death to wait ?”¹

By this time Evil has lost the disguise in which he passed for Good. The King sees with terror the mistake in which his life has been spent, and wishes to change places with a private soldier—with the Labourer, nay, even with the Beggar—so that he may have a lighter account to give in at the last. But each refuses : each sees that his own account will be heavy enough, and that the less he has to lose by death the less bitter will death be to him. The despised Cross is now seen as man’s only refuge ; and all confess that, since no station in life can be evil to a good, or good to an evil, man, so the ruler of life and the assigner of its several stations is not Fortune, but God.

Another allegoric *auto* is “The Sacred Year of Rome,” composed in honour of the jubilee of 1650. It is the Spanish ‘Pilgrim’s Progress.’ Man, attended by Free-

¹ “No hay Fortuna que Dios.”

will, is seen at its outset surveying two paths—one flowery and inviting, the other made forbidding by thorns; and is perplexed to know on which road to walk through the brief day of his pilgrimage.

A voice recalls him from the broad, to the narrow, way. At its entrance flows the fount of living waters; and by its side stands the baptiser, who discloses himself as Heavenly Love, informs the traveller (till now ignorant of his high destiny) that he was born to serve God here, and to enjoy Him hereafter, and invites him to set out at once on the pilgrimage to the New Jerusalem; offering to him as his companions himself and his nine attendant Virtues. Man accepts the offer, and the Virtues hasten to his side, and equip him for his journey.

Fear invests him with sackcloth, Chastity binds on his girdle, Obedience gives him a covering for his head, Pardon a staff, and Truth a passport. Then the travellers set out, singing as they go—

“Spirit of Holiness,
Guard ! Thou, too, Son of God !
Father ! we ask of Thee
Bread, pilgrims’ life-support,
Food which Thine angels eat
To us this day give, Lord !

.
Thou, of the angels’ bread,
Let Thy grace save us now ;
Us who, poor pilgrims weak,
Through these rough valleys go—
Valleys of grief and tears—
Thy face at least to know.
Thou of the angels’ bread,
Let Thy grace save us, Lord ! ”

Thus the journey is well begun ; but the World, the Flesh, and the Devil conspire to interrupt it. The World raises a gorgeous palace by the road-side, and, from its gilded turret, the Flesh holds out a golden cup to refresh the traveller in his weariness. The Virtues detect their foe, and implore Man to refuse it. But the Siren's charms overpower their voice, gain over Free-will, and draw Man to her side. He prepares to enter the World's house in search of his promised happiness ; and hopes to take his travelling companions (all but Chastity) along with him. But this cannot be. "He that offends in one point is guilty of all." The Virtues link hands and depart : Fear and Love, as first to come, so last to go. "I shall soon overtake you," says the imprudent pilgrim. "You may not be able," is the reply. "Surely, if I can lose you I can find you." "Ah ! no," is the answer. "Man of himself can lose God, but never can he find Him again, unless God Himself assists him."

Forsaken by all the Virtues, Man hastens to test the stability of the World's promises. He sees the light of dying day burning dim on the tower's glittering pinnacles ; and feels that he must lose no time in tasting the pleasures which he has paid so great a price for.

MAN.

" Hear me, 'mid thy deathless splendours,
Dweller in this stately hall !

FLESH.

At my threshold who doth call ?

MAN.

'Tis a pilgrim. Thou didst say,
 'Come ;' thy summons I obey,
 In thy light celestial,
 Glories of the world to find.

FLESH.

The world's glories ?

MAN.

Even so.

FLESH.

These be they, then ; thus they go,
 Passing swifter than the wind.

(The tower vanishes in flames.)

MAN.

Portent, like to which in kind
 Comes no second to appal,
 Strong my reason to enthral !

FREEWILL.

Ah ! my Lord, what now and where
 Is that lofty building fair ?

MAN.

Winds away have carried all.

FREEWILL.

All it offered, then, thy sight
 Mocked, with longing vain to fill.

MAN.

Nor could I content my will,
 But through one brief moment's flight ;
 Worldly glories then delight
 Not one instant, ceaseless wasting.

LUCIFER (*from within*).

Pilgrim ! traveller wrong way hastening !
In my fate behold thine own.
I, for one brief hour alone,
Lost the glory everlasting.

FREEWILL.

In the mount is left us nought
But a cavern's gloomy shade.

MAN.

Since, when all the rest did fade,
Day to nothing, too, was brought,
Let night's lodging there be sought.

(As Man prepares to enter the cavern, the World comes out of it.)

MAN.

Who art thou ?

WORLD.

The World am I.

MAN.

Was not thine that beauteous dome ?

WORLD.

Yes.

MAN.

Then what has it become ?

WORLD.

'Twas given to the winds, thereby
To elude thy tenancy.

MAN.

Yet thy promise what ?

WORLD.

I know,

'Twas to lodge thee.

MAN.

That word, so
Trusted by my heart when told,
Why not keep ?

WORLD.

My use of old
Is to promise ; not bestow.

MAN.

Hast thou not lodged other men ?

WORLD.

Yes ; but *where* thou knowest not.

MAN.

Think'st thou that their happy lot
In thy palace 'scaped my ken ?
Me, too, shelter in it then ;
Since thou seest with what gloom
Night's dark shadows round us come.

WORLD.

Good. Come in, see here thy cell ;
For I in king's house to dwell
Promise—but bestow a tomb.

(*Raises a flagstone, which discovers an open grave,
and vanishes.*)

FREEWILL.

Fine attention !

MAN.

Woe ! alas !

Ah ! how mighty and how strong
Terrors unto death belong !
Must I lodge me in this space ?

LUCIFER (*entering*).

Yes ; see here thy dwelling-place :
Enter it.

MAN.

Ah me ! but how
Couldst thou tell me then, e'en now,
That thou here didst pleasures seek ?

LUCIFER.

So I did.

MAN.

Such lies why speak ?

LUCIFER.

Why my word believedst thou ?

MAN.

It was not the truth then ?

LUCIFER.

Nay :

Nought but lies and vanity.
Had it been the truth, then I
No such thing had willed to say.

MAN.

Though 'twas shadow, why not stay
For at least a shadow's hour ?

LUCIFER.

Why ? because a fading flower
Is vain pomp the world adorning ;
Which has scarce unclosed with morning,
Ere it shrinks 'neath night's chill power.
'Twas this frailty of its state
Moved me such a gift to proffer ;
Couldst thou have enjoyed such offer
I had sought another bait ;
For, so deadly is my hate,
That to give man guiltiest joy
Doth my very soul annoy ;
Thus by pain, so oft I can,
Sooner will I ruin man
Than by pleasant thing destroy.
Now, that from these comrades parted,
Erewhile walking by thy side,
With them thou hast lost thy guide,
And from out thy right course started,
Desperate henceforth, weary-hearted,
Look no entrance more to have
Through that gate that opes to save ;
Since now, pilgrim gone astray !
Thou canst find no other way
But one leading to the Grave." ¹

(Exit.)

This striking scene leaves the unhappy pilgrim all but desperate. He desires to retrace his steps, but cannot. Freewill (enchainged by evil habits) stands powerless beside him; and he sorrowfully owns that he could destroy, but cannot save himself. He cries to Love for

¹ "El Año Santo de Roma."

aid. His call is heard and answered. One divine grace after another reappears, and by their joint efforts he is lifted from the pit into which he had fallen, and rescued from the Evil One and his two powerful allies ; defeated through their own premature exultation at their victory.

Another fine allegoric *auto* is that entitled “The Great Fair of the World.” Here the father sends out his two sons, each to lay out his intrusted talent in the fair. Whichever spends his best is to be rewarded by the hand of Grace. Guilt, the discarded first love of both brothers, follows them in disguise to try and win them back. One son takes Innocence for his attendant, the other Malice. The first chooses rugged, the second flowery paths ; the first detects Guilt, however cunningly hidden ; the second falls readily into her snares. The good elder brother keeps Innocence with him (though not easily) through the varied temptations of the fair. Inclined for a moment to buy Pride’s rich robes, he rejects them for the garment of Humility ; the mirror offered by Self-Knowledge, and the haircloth of Penitence, find in him a purchaser ; and when he turns his back on the glittering booths and uproarious merriment of the fair, and returns to his father’s house, it is that he may be there united to Grace for ever.

But the foolish younger brother lays out his precious talent in buying the wares spread before him by Pride, Lust, and Gluttony. He is indeed startled for a moment when he finds that he has lost the gift which Grace bestowed upon him ; but his compunction does not last long. Guilt mocks at Penitence and her goods, and he leaves them. She tells him that he is too young to think of death, or hold converse with Self-Knowledge ;

and he agrees with her. At first the pert and forward waiter of the wayside inn, then the shopman of Pride, again the leader of the blind man (Appetite) in a group of beggars, and lastly, dancing among a company of gitanos, Guilt's basilisk eye is seen by the spectator steadily fixed upon her victim throughout the *auto*. The scenes amid which she moves are gay and various as are John Philip's pictures of Spanish manners ; but on the purchases of the stroller, whom we watch as he moves from stall to stall, tremendous issues are hanging. He is expending his all ; and his bargains cannot be cancelled. His last and most fatal one is when he sets the final seal to his doom, by buying Guilt, the dancer, at the hands of her gipsy master. He returns with her to his father, who disinherits him ; and he awakes to the awful consciousness that the slave, whom he bought for his diversion, must now abide with him as a tyrant and tormentor for ever.

2D BROTHER.

“ Wretched am I in my woe,
Nowhere can I comfort find,
Who have lost, with careless mind,
The rich talent to me lent.
As upon the wind 'twas spent,
Nought I reap save mist and wind.
Have I now no company ?
Must I with this slave be pent ?

GUILT.

Yes ; for with thee still I went
Then, and now, thy Guilt to be.
When thou spak'st with Gluttony,
I, to spur thee on, stood there ;

I stood by, too, when Lust fair
Gained thy heart and bended knee ;
There I was when thou to Pride
Gav'st thy talent ; and, again,
When thy faithless heart, profane,
Christ's great Sacrament denied ;
There when thou thy seeming slave
Purchasedst, while Pleasure gay,
Walking by thy side brief way,
Led thee, thoughtless, to thy grave,—
So come thou with *me* to-day.¹

¹ “El Gran Mercado del Mundo.” Another of this class, and one of Calderon’s best *autos*, “The Great Theatre of the World,” would have been described here had space permitted. Readers curious in the matter will find an excellent account of it, with very beautiful versions, accompanying Archbishop Trench’s similar delineation of “Life’s a Dream”—a work already referred to with gratitude, which, if now out of print, cannot long be suffered so to remain.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

THE typical examples presented in the foregoing chapters will give the English reader some notion of Calderon's many-sided genius ; although, at least, each of the plays referred to must be read throughout before it becomes possible to measure their author's fertility of imagination, quickness of resource, unrivalled skill in construction, and wealth of metaphor ; while his beauties of diction, and his remarkable sweetness of verse, can only be enjoyed by a perusal of the originals in Spanish. Calderon's claim to be reckoned one of the greatest of lyric, no less than of dramatic poets, will be allowed after such perusal ; and be yet more fully confirmed by more extended researches,—especially among his *autos*. His tropical richness of hyperbole can only be fully estimated after a survey of passages, the shortest of which is too long to be quoted *in extenso* in a work like the present ;¹ and which have therefore (if mentioned

¹ It is shown on a small scale in speeches like the one quoted in Chap. iii. from "To-morrow will differ from To-day."

at all) been only briefly indicated. His method of returning again and again on an idea (as, for instance, in the speech of Beatrice in "The Love of Gomez Arias")—amplifying, enlarging, and adding to it each time, till it presents itself as a perfectly rounded whole—recalls, like the characteristic just named, eastern riches rather than western frugality, and has therefore only been exhibited in a fragmentary way. On the other hand, for reasons already stated, his characters have not received here such scanty justice as might have been apprehended from the narrow space provided for their display. The only figure in his stock repertory passed over in silence has been that of the *gracioso*, or buffoon; not that he is not (curiously enough, particularly in the religious plays) an amusing personage, but that, besides never equalling Shakespeare's clowns, even when their fooling is least excellent, some of Calderon's best—such as Escarpin in "The Two Lovers of Heaven," with the long stories he insists on telling, in and out of season—would have required a larger canvass than is used here.

Thus, in spite of inevitable deficiencies, it is hoped that even these few pages, culled from so many, may give some notion of that striking portraiture of a national character rather than of that of individuals, which is the true business of Calderon's drama—an ideal portraiture, of course, but that of an ideal for which the poet looked (as Latour well says) "to that heroic past, of which the age in which he lived was the continuation, if weak and pale, compared with the vigour of those earlier times. He painted the manners of his contemporaries; but to those manners he restored the energy of the preceding

century. For Calderon never forgot that the parents of his audience had known ‘Don John of Austria,’ and he depicted the present, with eyes firmly fixed on the past, with all its grandeur.”

For fear of wearying some readers, less than others might have desired has been here said about the *autos*. Properly speaking, these require a volume to themselves. They are the most unique, as they were the most cherished, productions of their great writer’s genius. Little as the Protestant Schlegel could have approved of the one which made Sismondi reproach Calderon as “the poet of the Inquisition,” fully as he must have felt the shock which parts of others are calculated to give to all enlightened piety, nevertheless that most competent judge sums up the impression made on his mind even by Calderon’s secular drama, and yet more by his *autos*, in these words concerning their writer: “Blessed man! he had escaped from the wild labyrinths of doubt into the stronghold of belief; from thence, with undisturbed tranquillity of soul, he beheld and portrayed the storms of the world. To him human life was no longer a dark riddle. His poetry, whatever its apparent object, is a never-ending hymn of joy on the majesty of the creation. He celebrates the productions of nature and human art with an astonishment always joyful and always new, as if he saw them for the first time in an unworn festal splendour. It is the first awaking of Adam, and an eloquence withal, a skill of expression, and a thorough insight into the most mysterious affinities of nature, such as high mental culture and mature contemplation can alone bestow. When he compares the

most remote objects,—the greatest and the smallest—stars and flowers,—the sense of all his metaphors is the mutual attraction subsisting between created things by virtue of their common origin ; and this delightful harmony and unity of the world, again, is merely a refulgence of the eternal all-embracing love.”

END OF CALDERON.

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S A I N T S I M O N

BY

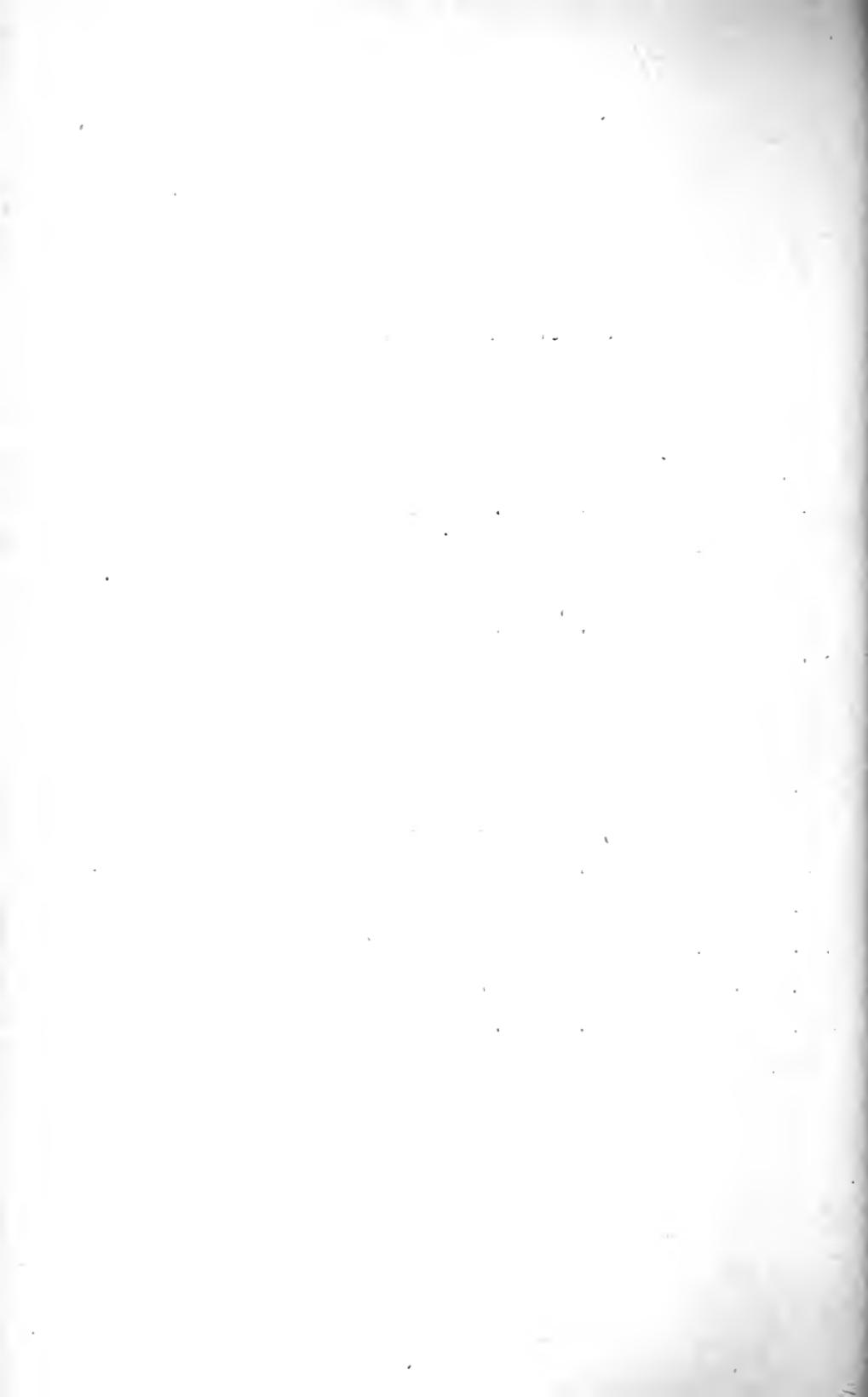
CLIFTON W. COLLINS, M.A.

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S A I N T S I M O N.

C H A P T E R I.

INTRODUCTION.

“A SECRET historian; a geometrician, diseased in body and mind; a good easy man, always dreaming, and treated as a dreamer,—there you have the three artists of the seventeenth century. They have startled and perhaps a little shocked us all. La Fontaine, the happiest, was the most perfect; Pascal, Christian and philosopher, the most elevated; Saint Simon, given up entirely to his fancy, is the most powerful and the most true.”¹ This is high praise, coming as it does from an accomplished critic like M. Taine, and must sound strange to many who know little of Saint Simon beyond the fact that he wrote memoirs of Louis XIV.’s reign. Most of the great writers of that age are familiar names enough to us. La Fontaine’s Fables, Pascal’s ‘Pensées,’ Fénelon’s ‘Télémaque,’ the plays of Molière and Racine,

¹ Taine, *Essais*, p. 297.

the sermons of Bossuet and Bourdaloue, and the letters of Madame de Sévigné, have their place in most libraries ; and, even in the form of selections or extracts, have probably been read to some extent by most persons who have read French at all. But Saint Simon, whose genius was in its own way as remarkable as theirs, and who has given us in his incomparable Memoirs a living picture of the old *régime*, is still, we believe, almost unknown, except to the historian or reviewer. To ordinary readers in this country he is still the shadow of a name, and nothing more. Even if we do not go so far as to ask, as some literary lady once asked, “Why was he made a saint ?” he is not unfrequently confused with his namesake and descendant, the Saint Simon of revolutionary fame ; and the philosophic friend of Robespierre is credited with having written the memoirs of his ancestor—the aristocrat of aristocrats.

At the same time it is not surprising that Saint Simon should be so little read. The fact is, that between the pressure of business and the whirl of modern society, few men have time to read anything beyond the reviews and periodicals of the day—if indeed they can find time to read so much ; and supposing that, in a fit of self-improvement, they take some classic from their book-shelves, or turn back to the literature of the eighteenth century, the last book that they would be likely to select would be a set of French memoirs in twenty volumes, digressive and discursive, and difficult to follow from the obscurity of the style and the variety of contemporary allusions. But the great drawback in his case (and it is the one unpardonable sin in a writer) is his length. Even Macaulay, who was credited with reading Photius for

pleasure, confesses that he found Saint Simon wearisome. “The good parts,” he declared, on reading the Memoirs a second time, “were as good as ever, but the road from fountain to fountain lay through a very dry desert.” An ordinary reader may well be excused for shrinking from a task that tried Macaulay’s patience; indeed it may be doubted if any one in this generation (excepting perhaps Saint Simon’s learned editor, M. Chéruel) has ever even tried to wade through those long and dreary chapters describing the ceremonial of the Spanish Court, the different classes of Spanish grandes, and the exact position and privileges of the French dukes and the Parliament of Paris. These tedious digressions spring from a weakness inherent in Saint Simon’s character—his mania for all questions connected with rank and pedigrees of the nobility. He seems indeed to have had the whole French peerage by heart. All their titles and dignities were intensely interesting to him; and he takes a singular delight in tracing the exact family history and relationship of nearly every personage he mentions in his Memoirs. The Baron Von-Thunder-Ten-Tronckh himself could not have been more exacting; and if there is a blot in any one of the “seize quartiers” of the family coat of arms, Saint Simon is sure to put his finger on it. For example, when the Abbé de Soubise was about to be received into the Chapter of Strasburg, Saint Simon at once goes back to the Abbé’s great-grandmother. Who was *she*? “A daughter of that cook, formerly scullion, and afterwards lackey to Henry IV.! ” Again, when the Princess des Ursins’ brother was about to make what was thought a *mésalliance*, Saint Simon writes: “Madame des Ursins cried out as if their own mother

had not been Aubry, their grandmother Bouhier daughter of the treasurer of a savings-bank, and their great-grandmother Beaune." So too, when Cardinal Alberoni wrote in a grand style of his dignity as a Roman citizen, and talked of "our Tacitus"—"A *Roman*, forsooth!" says Saint Simon; "why, he belonged to a little village near Bayonne, where his father sold cabbages, and he wormed himself into favour by making cheese-salads for Vendôme." Even the "affaire du bonnet," to which Saint Simon points again and again, as if it involved the gravest constitutional principles, was really only a trivial question of etiquette — whether the President should wear his cap on his head or place it before him on the table, when he addressed the peers in Parliament.

As we shall find, during the first few years of his life at Court he was incessantly occupied in trying these questions of precedence, and in questioning the genuineness of some of the proudest titles in France. It seems, on the face of it, a little absurd that a young duke of recent creation (for Saint Simon was only the second who bore the title) should be continually taking up arms against "new men"—or "mushrooms of fortune," as he terms them; but this firm belief in his own order—*morgue aristocratique*—is the key-note to his political career as well as to his character. The more he studied history, he tells us, the more firmly he was convinced that it was the dukes, and the dukes alone, who should or could save France in the future, as they had saved her in the past. Mischief enough had already been done during "the long reign of the vile *bourgeoise*," and it was the peers, with the dukes at their head, who should direct the councils of their sovereign.

In fact, Saint Simon would have revived the aristocracy of the feudal system, which had perished some centuries before he was born, and have transferred the institutions of Philip Augustus to the reign of Louis XIV. We shall find that in all his political schemes, both in connection with the young Duke of Burgundy and with the Regent Orleans, he constantly reverted to this ideal constitution,—a hierarchy culminating in the ducal rank, raised far above the lower orders of nobility, and having its place on the steps of the throne itself. This day-dream—for it was nothing more—had a special fascination for him, and he alludes to it in a hundred scattered passages; but it is almost unnecessary to add, that of all the wild and fanciful schemes ever imagined by philosopher or politician, this was perhaps the wildest and most hopelessly impossible.

Saint Simon either looked back to the past, or he looked forward to the future. Of the present time, and of the men of his own generation, he always speaks with the utmost bitterness. Society—that is, the Court, as he saw it—seemed to consist chiefly of rogues and rascals (*frippons et scélérats*), and, generally speaking, the most successful were in his eyes the greatest scoundrels. On whichever side he looked, he could find nothing but the vilest passions, the meanest motives, the basest principles; men employing their lives in some miserable intrigue for some miserable object—wasting their talents and squandering their fortunes, and supplanting their neighbours by superior villainy. And of all detestable characters, he paints in the strongest colours those of unprincipled priests like Dubois and Le Tellier, and unscrupulous lawyers like Harlay and Maisons.

Of a few intimate personal friends he speaks in terms of almost unqualified praise. Nothing is too good for his spiritual adviser, La Trappe; for his father-in-law, Marshal Lorges; for his friend and confidant, the Duke of Beauvilliers; and for his young hero, the Duke of Burgundy. But such men were as the very salt of the earth—the few good grains among the host of tares—and their solitary virtues only heightened the contrast of the corruption and profligacy around them. The strange thing is, that Saint Simon singles out for special attack precisely those men who were among the most distinguished and esteemed of their own generation. Among them we find such names as Noailles, the gay and fortunate diplomatist; Antin, the most charming and versatile of courtiers; Vendôme, the idol of the army, and the prince of boon companions; Villars, the hero of fifty battles; Rochefoucauld, the type of a *grand seigneur*. These men are each in their turn branded by Saint Simon with every epithet of scorn and hatred, and held up by him to everlasting ridicule. We have only to refer to the marginal summaries drawn up by his own hands, and we find that he has almost exhausted the vocabulary of abuse in describing their characters. Wickedness, perfidy, avarice, monstrous ingratitude, hateful obstinacy, criminal folly, faults upon faults, are some of the phases applied by him to the statesmen and soldiers of his time; and he describes the Duc de Noailles—who, if we may believe his apologist, has as much claim to our respect as Saint Simon himself—as “the most faithful and the most perfect copy of the serpent that tempted Eve,—so far as a man can approach the qualities of the chief of the fallen angels.”

But even this language is mild and moderate compared with that which he employs in describing such men as Vendôme and Dubois, or such women as the Regent's daughter, whom he seems to have hated with the perfect hatred of the old covenant. It is then that his indignation masters him, and his language becomes Scriptural in the vehemence of his denunciation. Indeed, we know of nothing since the days of the second Philippic so bitter, so scathing and so incisive, except perhaps Junius's indictment of the Duke of Grafton, or Macaulay's description of Barère.

In Saint Simon's case, time, instead of softening, seems only to have embittered the unrelenting hostility with which he pursues his enemies through their lives, and after their deaths—

“Eternal as their own, his hate
Surmounts the bounds of mortal fate,
And dies not with the dead.”

He dwells with an irrepressible satisfaction upon every incident in their decline and fall. He gloats over the closing scenes in their career, and he draws from their history the solemn warning of guilt followed by its attendant punishment, which, like the Nemesis or Até of the Greek drama, strikes down the insolent and guilty wretch in the very plenitude of his triumph. He is not surprised at the awful fate that befell the rich and learned Maisons, and destroyed him and his family through three generations. Such destruction was only the fitting reward of his impiety. So again, when the Bishop of Soissons died suddenly and terribly,—it was the judgment of God on him, says Saint Simon, for hav-

ing sold himself to the Jesuits, and for having signed the “Constitution.”

History, he thought, was full of such moral lessons to him who read it as it should be read ; and to give due effect to these lessons was part of the duty of the historian. “To him who considers the events which history records in their real and first origin, their degrees, and their progress, there is perhaps no religious book—next to Holy Scripture itself, and the great book of nature always open before our eyes—which so greatly raises our thoughts to God, which so continually keeps us in wonder and astonishment, or which shows us so clearly our nothingness and our blindness.”

But while he had this exalted idea of the purpose of history, he never seems to have realised his own responsibility as a historian. He wrote always furiously and recklessly—neither weighing his words nor measuring the effect of his sweeping denunciations of the men and society of his time. Generally speaking, a writer is induced to measure his statements and qualify his opinions by the ordinary restraints of publicity and criticism : “to-morrow the critics will come,” and it is the fear of this “to-morrow,” and of its pains and penalties, that acts as a safeguard against rash attacks on personal reputations. But the man who writes, as Saint Simon wrote, in the secrecy of his chamber, conscious that, in his time, no eye but his own will ever see his manuscripts ; and knowing, as he knew, that his work will only be read when he is himself far beyond the reach of praise or censure,—such a man writes without scruple or responsibility, with the curb loosened from his tongue and with the bridle taken off his lips. There

can be no action for libel with the dead ; friends and foes will be equally powerless to defend or attack him ; the verdict of posterity—whatever that verdict may be —can never reach him ; and his fame will come, if it comes at all, from a generation that never knew him.

“Son laurier tardif n’ombrage que sa tombe.”

Such a writer will be free to indulge in all the luxury of scorn and invective, to gratify every personal pique, to avenge himself on those who have insulted and injured him in his lifetime, by leaving them in their turn pilloried for ever in a fool’s paradise. And it is of this easy and not very dignified method of attack and retaliation that St Simon has undoubtedly availed himself. He has left his Memoirs behind him, as a mine is left in a deserted fortress, on the chance of an explosion that may ruin and destroy the enemy. This is what Chateaubriand meant when he said that “Saint Simon écrit à la diable pour l’immortalité !”

As a matter of fact, Saint Simon dared no more have published his Memoirs in his own lifetime, than the author of ‘Junius’ dared to drop his mask. We can fancy the storm of indignation that would have broken out, when the noblest families in France found themselves traduced and maligned by this “little man-devouring duke,” as Argenson called him ; when the Jesuits found worse things said of their Order by their supposed friend than had ever been said of them by their avowed enemy, Pascal ; when his colleagues in office found their abilities disparaged and their policy assailed by the man whom they regarded with some justice as the most incompetent politician of their number. “If these Memoirs

ever see the light," wrote their author, "I doubt not that they will cause a prodigious revulsion of feeling;" and it was fortunate for his personal safety that no accident ever betrayed their existence to his own generation. He would certainly have found himself in the Bastille before many days had passed — already being, as is proved by the songs and lampoons of the time, probably the most unpopular man in France. That he was himself fully sensible of the risk he ran is shown by his intense anxiety that some papers he had lent the Duke of Burgundy should not fall into the king's hands. "A writer who writes the truth, and nothing but the truth, must have lost his senses," he says, "if he allows it even to be suspected that he is writing. His work ought to be guarded by keys and the surest bolts, and to pass thus guarded to his heirs after him, who in their turn would do wisely to let it abide for one or two generations, and not to let it see the light till time has buried all resentments."

The difficulty that meets us on the threshold of his Memoirs is what to believe and what not to believe. Knowing how genuine and sincere Saint Simon is even in his hatreds, we should be disposed to accept all he has told us with implicit confidence. But then, unfortunately, we find his authority on so many matters of fact discredited, and in some cases disproved, by contemporary witnesses, that considerable suspicion rests on these countless anecdotes and *bons histoires* scattered through his pages. Some of these stories, so gravely recounted by him, are as wonderful in their way as anything that Herodotus heard from the Egyptian priests; indeed, since the days of the Father of History, it would be

difficult to find another writer so inquisitive, so credulous, and so garrulously-given as Saint Simon. We cannot say that his stories are not true, because he is often the only writer who has recorded them, and we have no means of proving either their truth or falsehood. But presumptive evidence is in many instances against them, and leaves us no alternative but to class them with those delightful stories of our childhood that enlivened the dreariest narratives,—Clarence's Malmsey butt, Tell's apple, Cambronne's famous speech, Louis XVI.'s last words — what Mömmsen calls “the rubbish - heap of tradition,” or what Mr Hayward places among “the mock pearls of history.”

When, for instance, Saint Simon tells us of the farrier of Salon and the marvellous vision that he saw, and how he told it to the king, and what the king said of it; or of the magpie that appeared to La Varenne, and its miraculous speech, and how La Varenne at once took to his bed and died,—all this reads like the headings of chapters from the “*Morte d'Arthur*.” So, again, when he describes so graphically how Marshal Villars was left alone under the tree at Friedlingen, weeping and tearing his hair for the battle that he believed lost, but was really all the time won by his lieutenant,—the description is as grotesque, and probably about as true, as Juvenal's picture of the one-eyed Hannibal riding on the last of his elephants. In the same way the hunting adventure that led to the death of Fargues, so dramatically told,—the story of the black princess who lived in a convent, and was thought to be some great personage (“*fort énigmatique*,” says Saint Simon)—the poisoning of Henrietta of Orleans—the secret marriage of Cardinal

Dubois—the pathetic death of Racine of a broken heart,—all these romantic tales must, we fear, be consigned to the same borderland between fact and fiction as the legends of ancient Rome or the historical plays of Shakespeare. But which is fact and which is fiction in this region of uncertainties, it is not within the province of this volume to determine. We must take Saint Simon as we find him, and, unless he is clearly and flagrantly wrong, leave him the responsibility of his own stories.

It is a pity that there should be even a question of doubt in his case,—that a writer with all his keenness of observation and marvellous powers of description, with almost every faculty needed to make a great historian, should fail in the one essential point—historical truth. In this respect his very talents have been a snare to him. His fondness for anything graphic and picturesque, his appreciation of a good story when he heard one (and we can trace this taste in the countless *bon mots* and anecdotes that he regales us with), his eagerness always to point the moral and adorn the tale, when he had the chance of doing so,—all this inclined him to take the picturesque and poetical side of what he saw and heard, rather than confine himself to the dull and prosaic region of commonplace.

Again, Saint Simon seems to have been wanting in another gift, necessary to the man who tells us the history of his times—the capacity for examining and sifting evidence. He evidently believed implicitly whatever his friends chose to tell him; indeed he is candid enough to give us several instances in which Orleans or Lauzun practised on his credulity, and we can well believe that these were not solitary exceptions. “My character,” he

says, “upright, frank, free, natural, and far too simple, was expressly made for being taken in the snares.” All the gossip of the back-stairs, all the scandalous stories that circulated in the *Œil de Bœuf* or on the terraces of Marly, all the ill-natured tales told him by his brother-in-law, Lauzun, whom he declares to be a perfect treasury of anecdotes,—Saint Simon heard and duly noted down evening after evening. Then again, he constantly cross-questioned the king’s surgeon and the king’s valets—much as Mr Greville cross-questioned old Batchelor—and we may imagine that what he heard in this way did not lose in the transmission. But it was just this kind of information, got in this underhand manner, that he considers, as he is careful to tell us, the most important and valuable of all testimony. These men, he says,—Bontems, and Bloin, and Maréchal—were always in the royal bedroom or presence-chamber, and were all eyes and ears.

He frequently describes interviews, in his dramatic fashion, which could not possibly have been known to more than two or three people, and which, it might be supposed, would have been kept profoundly secret by them—for their own safety and reputation, if for no other reason. But nothing seems to have been hidden from this keen and vigilant observer. He was as ubiquitous and omniscient as those scoundalmongers described by Plautus;¹ and even the circumstances of a *tête-à-tête* in the king’s private cabinet or the Regent’s bedroom seem, by some means or other, to have reached Saint Simon’s ears. To take an instance at random: we are told how “Monsieur’s” first wife—Henrietta, daughter of Charles

¹ Plautus, *Trinummus*, i. 2.

I. of England—died suddenly and terribly, in the prime of her youth and beauty, in 1670, after only a few hours' illness. Bossuet has painted for us, in a famous sermon, the confusion and terror at Versailles when the Court was awaked at midnight by the cry of “*Madame se meurt*,” and then of “*Madame est morte*;” and Saint Simon gives, in his own manner, what was probably the popular version of her death. The king, who was greatly shocked by what had happened, suspected foul play on the part of some of the dissolute hangers-on in Monsieur's household, and before dawn the same morning sent for Brissac, lieutenant of his guards :—

“He told him to choose six body-guards, trusty men, whose secrecy could be depended on, and send them to seize the house-steward, and bring him to his cabinet by the back-stairs. This was done before daybreak. As soon as the king perceived him, he ordered Brissac and the chief valet to retire, and putting on a countenance and tone likely to cause the greatest terror—

“‘My friend,’ said he, looking at the man from head to foot, ‘listen to me carefully : if you confess everything, and only answer the truth in what I wish to know,—whatever you have done, I pardon you, and the matter shall never be mentioned. But take care not to conceal the least thing from me, for if you do so, you are a dead man before you leave the room. Has Madame been poisoned?’

“‘Yes, Sire,’ he answered.

“‘And who has poisoned her, and how was it done?’

“He replied that it was the Chevalier de Lorraine who had sent the poison to Beuvron and to Effiat, and told the king all I have just written. Then the king, redoubling his assurance of pardon and his menaces of death—

“‘And my brother, did *he* know?’

“‘No, Sire; none of us three were fools enough to tell

him about it. He can never keep a secret : he would have ruined us all.'

"At this answer the king gave a great 'Ha!' like a man oppressed by a weight, and who all at once breathes again.

"'Very well,' said he, 'that is all I wanted to know. But are you positive of what you say? Do you assure me distinctly it is so?'

"He then called back Brissac, and ordered him to escort the man part of his way, when all at once he let him go at liberty."

The whole scene is probably a fiction, for there is the clearest evidence that the Princess Henrietta was not poisoned at all ; but it illustrates so well Saint Simon's manner of treating a story that interested him, that we have given it just as it stands. Most writers would have contented themselves with recording the fact that Louis was supposed to have sent for his brother's steward and wrung a confession from him ; but Saint Simon tells it all as dramatically as if he had been himself hidden behind the tapestry, and heard every word that passed in this strange interview. And it is the same throughout the Memoirs. Wherever he can, he throws his narrative into the form of a dialogue, and these dialogues are so real and lifelike, that, excepting in Balzac and Walter Scott, we know of nothing like them in romance or history. We should have been inclined to have classed them with the fictitious speeches in Livy or Thucydides ; but Saint Simon claims for them a far higher authenticity. They are, he expressly says, the faithful reports of actual speeches, written *sur le champ*, and losing rather than gaining in effect by being written instead of spoken. And as far as his own speeches are concerned, we can quite imagine that the fire and force of his

natural eloquence could scarcely be reproduced in writing, especially in some of his stormy interviews with Noailles and the Regent, where the concentrated passion of the speaker breathes through every line of his remonstrance or invective, and makes one almost regret that he could not have lived a century later and enlivened a modern parliamentary debate.

Among the critics of his own country, from Voltaire downwards, Saint Simon has found nearly as many enemies as friends. Both the Duc de Noailles and M. Theophile Lavallée pronounce his personal prejudices to be stronger than his sense of truth; M. Monty has written an essay to show that he was sour and cross-grained in character; M. Chéruel, in his learned work, tells us that he is prejudiced, inconsistent, partial, credulous, and a fabulist rather than a historian. But, on the other hand, there is another school of critics, beginning with Villemain and Marmontel, who have set him on a pinnacle above every other prose writer of his time. By these admirers he is declared to be caustic as Le Sage, pathetic as Racine, picturesque as Tacitus. Taine, as has been seen, ranks him with Pascal and La Fontaine; and Sainte Beuve places him alongside of Bossuet and Molière. Praise cannot go much beyond this; still, it is worth while quoting the great critic's last panegyric on his favourite author:—

“ You talk of Tacitus, who has admirably condensed, worked up, kneaded, cooked and recooked at the [midnight] lamp, who has gilded with a sombre tint his burning and bitter pictures,—do not repent, Frenchmen, of having had among you in the heart of Court life at Versailles, and ever on the track of the human quarry, this little duke with the piercing eye, cruel, insatiable, always on the chase, ferreting

about, present everywhere, swooping on his prey, and laying waste on all sides. Thanks to him,—a Tacitus with no reserves and no restraints,—we have nothing to envy in the earlier writer. And what is more, the vein of comedy, which he has so boldly scattered through his Memoirs, has given us in him a Tacitus *à la Shakespeare*.¹

It only remains to say something as to the history of these famous Memoirs,—how they were originally written, and how they have descended to us. As is well known, Saint Simon amused himself in his old age by making notes in an interleaved copy of Dangeau's Memoirs, but it may be doubted whether (as has been thought) “he condescended to borrow from Dangeau by a curious kind of plagiarism.”² The two writers had absolutely nothing in common beyond the fact that their memoirs related to the same period ; and they differed so entirely in their method and their manner of treating the same subjects, that they cannot even be compared. It may be safely said that, if anything, Dangeau owes far more to Saint Simon than Saint Simon owes to Dangeau ; for the only readable portions of those twenty octavo volumes, which M. Feuillet de Conches has so laboriously edited, are the notes and illustrations added by Saint Simon. Dangeau's Memoirs themselves are as dull and uninteresting as pages from the ‘Court Circular’ or the ‘London Gazette.’ “The king took medicine ;” “Monseigneur went out wolf-hunting ;” “Madame passed the afternoon with Mademoiselle Bessola ;”—and so on, page after page, and volume after volume. “It is difficult,” as Saint Simon says, “to understand how a man could

¹ Sainte Beuve, Nouveaux Lundis, x. 263.

² Reeve's Royal and Republican France, i. 126.

have had the patience and perseverance to write a work like this every day for fifty years—so dry, so meagre, so constrained, and so literally matter-of-fact."

Nor again does it seem clear, as many editors suppose, that Saint Simon's "additions" to Dangeau's Memoirs were the basis of his own; indeed it may be questioned whether he even thought of annotating Dangeau's Memoirs till his own were in a fair way of completion. He tells us expressly that it was his reading the memoirs of the last century that first suggested the idea of his writing his own; that he began his journal in 1694, when he was a young lieutenant encamped with Marshal Lorges's army on the Rhine. In 1699, again, we find him writing to the Abbot of La Trappe, to ask his advice (as he always did) in a matter of conscience. He has been writing memoirs, he tells La Trappe, of which "a considerable part is finished," and in which "the reputations of thousands of people are compromised;" and he asks for some rule by which he can speak the truth without wounding his conscience. What answer was returned we have no means of knowing; but as Saint Simon sent him his account of the Luxemburg lawsuit,¹ La Trappe had the opportunity, at any rate, of forming an opinion as to the tone and spirit of the remainder.

In any case, from that time until 1723 (nearly thirty years) Saint Simon continued day after day, or rather evening after evening, secretly taking notes of all that passed before him,—even writing down the actual words of the speeches used. After some striking scene at Court—that after Monseigneur's death, for instance,

¹ See p. 35.

which Sainte Beuve pronounces to be unrivalled in history—he would sit in his dark cabinet at the back of his suite of rooms, writing fast and furiously, without resting to polish or correct, careless as to whether his sentences were incoherent or the style confused, so long as the picture itself stood out boldly from the canvas. What cared he for “style”? He owns himself that he never regarded his manner of expression, so long as he could explain his meaning.

“ I was never a student of the Academy. I have not been able to cure myself of the fault of writing rapidly. To make my style more exact and agreeable by correcting it, would be to recast the whole work, and this labour would pass my strength, and would run the risk of being unpleasing (*ingrate*). To correct well what one has written, one must know how to write well. It will be easily seen that I have no right to pique myself on *that* quality. I have thought of nothing all along except exactitude and truth.”

For thirty years, as has been said, Saint Simon continued to write daily his impressions of men and events as they passed before him, and then, when he finally left the Court in 1723, he carried with him this enormous mass of notes and memoranda and treatises and essays; and these were the rough materials of his Memoirs, as well as of the notes and illustrations copied by him into the blank pages of Dangeau’s journal. For thirteen years he continued this work of revision and selection. Then, lastly, in 1740, he began to make a fair copy of the whole,—transcribing them carefully in a small clear hand, with many abbreviations, but few corrections. Even thus written closely, they filled three thousand folio sheets. Following the example of Buffon and

Bossuet, he divided them into neither volumes nor chapters, but added a marginal summary, and a classified index of subjects.

Thus the Memoirs were really the one engrossing occupation of his lifetime,—not of the few years preceding his death.

Saint Simon, with all his talents, was the worst possible man of business (“I scarcely know the four simple rules of arithmetic,” he told the Regent, when he wanted to make him Minister of Finance), and he died heavily in debt. By his will he left his manuscripts to his cousin, the Bishop of Metz, as being a man of prudence and discretion, and an exact inventory was made of them accordingly. But the creditors claimed them, and a lawsuit took place between them and the heirs of the estate, to decide the right of possession,—the latter wanting to keep them as heirlooms, and the former to realise something by their sale. It ended, however, in a higher authority intervening ; and all these precious documents, after having been left six years in charge of M. Delaleu, a notary, were impounded and carried off to the Foreign Office “by order of the king.” So far this was an advantage, as it prevented their being dispersed or sold : in fact, M. Baschet thinks their seizure may have been the result of a secret agreement between Saint Simon’s family and the Duke de Choiseul, the Foreign Minister.

It was evidently known from the first, that among these numerous manuscript volumes (about 280 in all), these famous Memoirs might be found ; for, shortly after they had been locked up in the Foreign Office, we find the Abbé de Voisenon commissioned to read them

and extract some of the more piquant anecdotes to amuse Louis XV. and Madame de Pompadour; and Madame du Deffand wrote in 1771 to Horace Walpole that she had just read them "with inexpressible delight," and promised to send them to him by the hands of a certain Abbé. But they underwent "a strange adventure" on their way from Chanteloup, and never reached Strawberry Hill. Though still kept "prisoners of state," it seems that they were lent from time to time to certain privileged persons, and copies, all more or less incorrect, made from the more interesting portions. Voltaire had seen them, and intended to refute them. Duclos used them for his '*Secret History of Louis XIV.*' and Marmontel (and Anquetil after him) made large extracts from them.

In 1780 a volume was published at Brussels, purporting to be extracts from the journal of a celebrated duke and man of letters, "better known by the excess of his frankness than by that of his credulity." Then appeared '*A Gallery of the Ancient Court;*' and at last, in 1788, Saint Simon's name was boldly placed on the title-page of some extracts from the Memoirs, borrowed or stolen by one Soulavie, who seems to have been as impudent and as unscrupulous an impostor as La Beaumelle. But all this time the precious Memoirs themselves remained with the rest of the manuscripts in the Foreign Office, and it was not till 1819 that the head of the family (a General Saint Simon) obtained leave from Louis XVIII. to have his ancestor's journals handed over to him. In 1830 the first authentic and complete edition was published, and it was at the meeting of the Sorbonne in the same year that Villemain pronounced

his well-known panegyric on the writer. We are told the effect produced on the literary world at Paris by their publication was prodigious, and Sainte Beuve can only compare it to that caused by the *Waverley Novels*. It was, he says, as if a curtain had suddenly been lifted from the past century, and had let in a flood of light upon every corner of Versailles as it might be seen in the days of the Great King.

The Memoirs, as we have them now in M. Chéruel's edition, leave nothing to be desired in the way of completeness and correctness, but they are not a tenth part of what Saint Simon actually wrote and left behind him. There are still to be found, buried somewhere in the catacombs of the Foreign Office on the Quay d'Orsay, no less than two hundred and sixty-six portfolios or volumes filled with notes, letters, treatises, and memoranda, all in Saint Simon's handwriting. All these documents had been kept together until M. Dumont classified and rearranged the archives of the Foreign Office in 1848. Where they are now, no one seems exactly to know. They appear to be regarded in the light of an "Eleusinian mystery," about which it is a sacrilege even to inquire; and the questions asked from time to time by some inquisitive man of letters are not only not answered, but produce "an emotion" in the official mind. When Guizot was Foreign Minister, an attempt was made towards publishing some of the State papers of the Monarchy, and we have the result in Mignet's work on the 'Spanish Succession.' Had he only added to this the publication of Saint Simon's 'Paquet d'Espagne,' some further new and curious light might

have been thrown on the tangled web of diplomacy which preceded the great war.

It is impossible even to conjecture what is or what is not contained in this mass of unpublished manuscripts. Lemontey says that among them is an "immense and varied correspondence"—nearly nine hundred letters—probably the original of every letter Saint Simon received, and the copy of every letter he wrote. These would no doubt explain much that is obscure and inconsistent in the Memoirs. They might rectify his injustices; they might give reasons for his unaccountable prejudices; they might possibly reveal a kindness and good-nature unsuspected at present; they might give us the genial and domestic side of his character. In short, until his letters are published, we cannot be said to know Saint Simon.¹ Whether they will ever be published or not depends on the liberality or caprice of the French Foreign Office; but so many literary men have so often vainly tried even to get a sight of these famous manuscripts, that not much hope of success is given for the future. The worst fear is that their publication may be delayed until it is too late,—that some accidental fire, or some fresh outburst of Communism, may destroy these priceless manuscripts, and that they may be as irrecoverably lost to posterity as the missing decades of Livy or the greater part of the orations of Lysias.²

¹ "Un Saint Simon épistolaire et prime-sautier est tout entier à révéler."—Baschet.

² It appears that the permission, so long sought for, has at last been given (March 1880),—thanks to M. de Freycinet, Minister for Foreign Affairs,—and that M. de Beilisle is preparing a new edition of the Memoirs, while M. Drumont is studying the documents connected with Saint Simon's embassy to Spain in 1721.

CHAPTER II.

SAINT SIMON'S FAMILY.

LA FERTÉ VIDAME, Saint Simon's family seat, where the Rouvroys had lived from time immemorial, was a feudal chateau, built in a square, and guarded by a moat and embattled walls. Of the chateau itself not a stone remains. Not many years after Saint Simon's death it was bought by the great capitalist Jean Joseph Laborde, who, with all his good qualities, had certainly no antiquarian tastes, for he destroyed the old chateau with its traditions and associations, and built in its stead a house in a more modern style. But though the chateau itself has disappeared, such an exact inventory of its contents has been left among Saint Simon's papers, that we know every picture and piece of tapestry in each room; the chairs covered with brocaded silk; the curtains of green *taffetas* with gold fringe; the library of six thousand volumes; and even the writing-table "of cherry-wood, covered with stamped morocco," on which the famous Memoirs were written, and the "bureau with seven drawers," where they were probably kept under lock and key.

Claude Saint Simon, father of the Memoir-writer, had

been a page in the Court of Louis XIII., and owed his fortune to a lucky accident. The king, like all the Bourbons, was passionately fond of hunting, and it was part of Claude Saint Simon's duties to bring him his second horse; and his ingenuity in enabling his Majesty to change horses without dismounting was his first introduction to the royal favour. Once started at Court, the little page of the stables rose by rapid steps. He became Chief Squire, First Gentleman of the Bedchamber, Grand Wolf-hunter, Knight of the Order of the Holy Ghost, Captain of the Palace-Guard at Saint Germains, and Governor of the Castle of Blaye. Throughout his description Saint Simon paints his father as the Last of the Barons—"one in whom some spark of the feudal spirit still burned"—the hero of a bygone age and "the devoted servant of the best and greatest of kings." We are told that his sagacity and discretion made him many friends at Court, and even gained for him the confidence of the great Richelieu himself.

"When the shades of misfortune were gathering round this Minister," says Saint Simon, "my father was often suddenly awoke at midnight by his bed-curtains being drawn aside by a valet with a candlestick in his hand, and there would be Richelieu standing behind him. And the cardinal would then take the candlestick and seat himself at the foot of the bed, crying out that he was lost, and had come to my father for advice and assistance, repeating some orders he had received, or some passage of arms that he had just had with the king."

In fact, it was by Claude Saint Simon's help that Richelieu, on the eve of his disgrace, had the long secret interview with Louis, and rehearsed the farce of his

pretended resignation, to be afterwards publicly performed on the celebrated “Day of Dupes.” By Louis himself Saint Simon was both honoured and trusted, and all would have gone well with him (if we may believe his son) had he not incurred the enmity of Chavigny, the Minister of War. On some affront, real or fancied, from this Minister, he threw up his office at Court, and retired to the Castle of Blaye. There he stayed some four years, still keeping up a correspondence with Louis, until summoned once more to Versailles on the occasion of the king’s last illness. It was his duty at the funeral to throw the sword of state upon the coffin as it lay in the open vault, and, says Saint Simon, “he has often told me that, when he threw the sword, he was for the moment on the point of throwing himself after it.”

In that grave lay buried the hero and idol of the old duke’s life ; and the memory of Louis XIII. was always kept sacred at the chateau of La Ferté. Saint Simon himself wore a ring with this king’s miniature set in diamonds on it ; there was a picture of him in every room both of his town and country houses ; there was a statue of him in the chapel, with a lamp kept constantly burning before it.

“ Never,” says Saint Simon, “ did my father console himself for the death of Louis XIII.; never did he speak of him without tears in his eyes ; never did he mention him except as the king his master ; never did he fail going to Saint Denis on his behalf, year after year, on the 14th of May, or to offer to his memory a solemn mass at Blaye when he found himself there on that anniversary. It was a feeling of veneration, affectionate remembrance, even tenderness, that he expressed in words whenever he spoke of him ; and he gloried in dwelling upon his personal exploits and on his private virtues.”

Saint Simon's account of the heroic part played by his father in the war of the Fronde has been called in question, with some reason. It is even said to be almost entirely pure romance ; but we must leave the responsibility of his statements with the writer. According to his account, nothing could be nobler or more independent than the duke's conduct in those troubled times which followed Louis XIII.'s death. He resisted all the tempting offers of Condé ; he refused the bribes of the King of Spain ; he was proof even against the charming eloquence of the Duchess de Longueville ; he armed 500 gentlemen at his own expense, and garrisoned Blaye in the name of the King of France ; and when proposals came for a surrender of the place, he threatened to tie a shot to the heels of the next messenger and throw him into the Gironde,—“ for as long as he lived,” he said, “ he would never fail the child and widow of his old master.” In gratitude Mazarin offered him the choice of a marshal’s baton or the title of prince ; but the old duke, in his pride, would have neither the one nor the other. He would never, he declared, tarnish the honour of his family by allowing it to be supposed possible that his loyalty could be bought or sold.

Some years after this, Claude Saint Simon happened one day to look into Rochefoucauld’s Memoirs of his Time, and there found himself represented as having broken his word to Condé, and holding Blaye for the king, when he had agreed to surrender it to the Frondists.

“ My father felt so keenly the atrocity of this calumny that he seized a pen and wrote on the margin of the volume, ‘*The writer has told a lie.*’ Not content with this, he then went and discovered the publisher (for the book was not sold

openly on its first appearance), and asked to see all the copies of the work,—prayed, promised, threatened, and was so persistent that he made the man show them. He at once took a pen and wrote in every copy the same marginal note as before. You may imagine the astonishment of the bookseller and the subsequent indignation of M. de Rochefoucauld. There was a great noise made in the matter, but nothing came of it."

The old duke married again in 1670—a charming wife—and soon afterwards there came a letter from Madame de Montespan, offering to the new duchess what was then supposed a high mark of Court favour, the post of Lady-in-Waiting to the king's mistress. But the duke would not hear of it. "He opened the letter, and at once took a pen and politely declined the offer, adding, that 'at his age he had taken a wife, not for the Court, but for himself.'"

The writer of the *Memoirs* was the child of the second marriage, being born in 1675; and he always speaks of his mother, on the few occasions when he mentions her name, in terms of affection and respect, although he does not think it necessary to go into her family history. "She was an Aubefine,"—he says, very curtly; and one is inclined to suspect that the Aubefines had not much to boast of in the way of pedigree, and certainly could not be compared to his father's family, the Rouvroys, who traced their descent from Charlemagne. But though, after the first few chapters, the dowager-duchess disappears from the *Memoirs*, she seems to have indirectly exercised a strong influence over her son. Even when he was fifty years old, and a member of the Regent's Council, we find him still deferring to her authority, although the question was the marriage of his

daughter. The rest of the family, including the young lady herself, were strongly opposed to the match ; yet he tells us, "My mother thought differently, and she was accustomed to decide." And the marriage took place as she wished.

Among other pieces of good advice that his mother gave him during his boyhood was a warning that his future in life must depend on himself, for he had no near relatives and no friends at Court : he must not, therefore, rest idly on his oars, and must do something and be somebody ; and he says that she succeeded in inspiring him with a great ambition to rise by his own efforts. Meanwhile he was carefully educated, first by a Jesuit at home—a Father Sanadon, the only member of the Order of whom he speaks with anything like respect. Then he was sent to the Academy at Rochefort, where he studied science and philosophy. But he tells us that he had no taste for metaphysics : what delighted him most were the chronicles and memoirs of his own country, and it was their perusal that first gave him the idea of writing his own. "My firm resolve to keep them entirely to myself appeared" (so he says) "to make up completely for the inconveniences that did not fail to occur to me."

CHAPTER III.

SAINT SIMON IN THE ARMY.

APPROACHING the mature age of seventeen, Saint Simon got tired of his books and lessons, and—excited by the example of his fellow-pupil, the young Duke of Chartres, then setting out for his first campaign—he induced his father to take him to Versailles and present him at Court. Louis received them both very graciously, and at once enrolled the young men in the regiment known as the “Grey Musketeers.” The following year (1692), young Saint Simon set off to join the army in Flanders, with what would seem in these days an immense camp equipment for a cadet,—thirty-five horses or sumpter-mules, and two gentlemen in attendance, a tutor and a squire, charged by his mother with the special care of his person. Neither of these two guardians, however, seems to have been of much use to their young master. In the first action, the tutor lost his hat and wig, while his horse took the bit in his teeth and bolted with him into the enemy’s lines; while the squire kept at a prudent distance from the firing, and only came up when it was all over, to congratulate people generally on the brilliant success of the day. “I was so surprised

and indignant at his effrontery," says Saint Simon, "that I never answered him a word then, and have never spoken to him since."

This was one of the last campaigns in which Louis ever took the field in person. As usual, his Majesty was accompanied by an immense retinue,—marshals, princes of the blood, nobles with their equipages and attendants, and half the ladies of the Court, besides hosts of camp-followers, and endless trains of provisions, baggage-waggons, and artillery. A review was held in the plains near Mons, and 120,000 men were drawn up in two lines extending over eight miles of country. Then Namur, the strongest fortress in the Netherlands, was solemnly invested under the direction of Vauban, "the soul of sieges." Earthworks were thrown up, trenches were opened; parallels and escarpments were formed in a manner that would have delighted the heart of Corporal Trim; and all went well for the besiegers till the 8th of June, the day of Saint Medard, who answers to our Saint Swithin. On that day, unfortunately, a deluge of rain set in, and lasted without intermission for three weeks. The country became a quagmire; the roads were flooded, and the discomfort and difficulties caused were so great, that the soldiers, furious with the weather, broke and burnt every image of the unlucky Saint Medard that they could lay their hands on. Carts and waggons were useless for transport, owing to the mud, and everything required for the camp, from the gunpowder to the forage, had to be carried on the backs of mules and horses. The common troopers took their share of the fatigue-duty cheerfully enough; but when it came to the turn of the fine gentlemen of the

king's guards to carry sacks of corn to Luxemburg's camp, they not only murmured loudly, but on one occasion threw down their sacks, and flatly refused to lift them on the horses.

"I arrived with my detachment of musketeers just as the guards made their refusal, and I loaded my sack before their eyes. Marin (the cavalry brigadier, and a lieutenant of the body-guards) saw me at the same moment, and, full of wrath at the refusal he had just met with, cried out—at the same time pointing me out, and calling my name—that, since *I* did not find this duty beneath me, the troopers and guardsmen need not feel it any dishonour or humiliation to follow my example. This reproof, joined to the severe air of Marin, had such an immediate effect, that instantly, without a word of reply, the guardsmen filled their sacks as quickly as possible."

Saint Simon's spirited conduct was repeated to Louis, and he received in consequence, as he tells us, many flattering marks of royal favour during this wearisome siege. Namur at last capitulated, and shortly afterwards the campaign itself came to an end; but the exultation of the French over the fall of the fortress was greatly damped by the news which had just come of the disastrous sea-fight off Cape La Hogue.

Saint Simon lost his father early in the following year (1693). "He died," he says, "almost before they had time to call out that he was ill,—there was no more oil in the lamp. I heard the sad news as I came back from the king's *coucher*. The night was given to the just sentiments of nature, and early the next morning I went to find Bontems" (the king's valet)—to secure his influence in procuring some of the offices held by his father.

The whole strength of the kingdom was now put forth, and five large armies took the field at once. Louis again assumed the command in person, and joined his forces with those of the Duke of Luxemburg on the Flemish frontier. The Prince of Orange found himself hemmed in by two armies, each of them superior to his own, and cut off from all supplies and reinforcements. As he said afterwards in a letter to a friend, he was caught in a trap, and nothing but a miracle could have saved him.

But suddenly, when Luxemburg was congratulating himself on this rare opportunity, Louis declared his intention of sending his own army off to the German frontier, and returning himself to Versailles. It was in vain that the Duke went on his knees and implored him with tears in his eyes to seize this chance of annihilating his enemy. Louis persisted in his resolution, and marched off the next day to join the ladies. His soldiers murmured openly ; and the officers, high and low, could not conceal their disgust and disappointment at leaving such a promising campaign without drawing their swords.

“I chanced,” says Saint Simon, “to be going alone on duty to M. de Luxemburg’s headquarters, as I often used to do, merely to see what was going on, and what was likely to be the programme the next day. I was greatly surprised not to find a soul there, and to hear that every one was on the king’s side of the camp. I was sitting there pensive and stock-still upon my horse, wondering what on earth this could mean, and debating whether I should return or push on to the king’s army, when I saw the Prince de Conti coming from our camp, followed only by a page and a groom with a spare horse. ‘What are you doing there?’ he cried out as he joined me, laughing at my surprise ; and he explained that he was just going to wish the king good-bye, and that I had bet-

ter go with him to do the same. ‘What do you mean by wishing good-bye?’ I asked. Then he ordered his page and his groom to follow him at a little distance, and asked me to tell my lackey to do the same. And then he told me all about the retreat of the king, dying with laughter, and made tremendous fun of it all—for he completely trusted me, in spite of my youth. I listened with all my ears, and my inexpressible astonishment stopped my asking any questions. Chatting together in this manner, we met all the world on their way back, and we joined them.”

The next day Louis set off for Namur, where the ladies were waiting for him, and from Namur returned to Versailles. Left to himself, Luxemburg at once marched after the Prince of Orange, and found him encamped in a strong position near Neerwinden.

Saint Simon gives us a graphic, though confused, account of this battle—next to Malplaquet and Waterloo, the bloodiest ever fought in that part of Europe. It was the only action he was ever engaged in, and he tells us with pardonable vanity how his own regiment charged five times; how his colonel and brigadier were killed; and how a gold button was shot away from his own doublet. He has left us a description of the hero of the day—the Duke of Luxemburg—who was, if Marlborough be excepted, the greatest captain of the century:—

“Nothing could be more exact than the *coup d'œil* of M. de Luxemburg; nothing could be more brilliant, more carefully planned, more far-sighted than he showed himself in presence of the enemy, or on a day of battle, coupled with an audacity, a playfulness, and a *sang froid* that allowed him to see everything, and to foresee everything in the midst of the hottest fire, and of the most imminent danger. It was there that he was really great. For the rest he was idleness itself. He rarely walked, unless there

was some great necessity; gambling, conversation with his intimate friends, and every evening a supper with a very small number (nearly always the same); and if he was encamped near any town, care was taken that the fair sex should be agreeably mingled with the other guests. At such times Luxemburg was inaccessible to all the world, and if any emergency occurred, it was Puységur (the second in command) who gave the orders. Such was the life of this great general when with the army, and such it was also at Paris, when the Court and the great world occupied his days and pleasure his evenings."

Saint Simon occupied the interval between his two campaigns characteristically enough—in bringing a lawsuit against the great Marshal whom he has just described. It is quite clear that the details of this question of precedence, which would in modern days have been decided by the Heralds' College or by the Committee of Privileges in half an hour, have a far greater interest and importance in his eye than all the battles ever fought. Luxemburg had claimed the dormant title of the Duke of Piney—a title dating from 1581—which, if proved, would give him precedence over all the dukes except one on the roll of peers. To substantiate this claim, he had (according to Saint Simon) ferreted out the daughter and heiress of the last Duke of Piney by his *second* wife, and married her, although she was "hideously ugly, like some frightfully fat fishwoman in her cask;" and then he had bribed the real heirs (the children of the *first* wife)—an imbecile priest and his sister who had taken the veil—to waive their claims to the title and estates. Lastly, he had got himself created Duke of Piney by new letters-patent, dating from 1662.

All this was monstrous, according to Saint Simon. The ancient title was virtually extinct, or, if not extinct, should have descended to the imbecile priest shut up in St Lazare. And so he induced his brother peers to enter on their hopeless crusade against Luxemburg's claim ; but, as he confesses himself, everything was against them from the first. Just then Luxemburg was the hero of the hour, fresh from a victorious campaign, the friend of royalty, and popular with all men of all classes —“in a word, the ladies, the rising generation, all the fashion of Court and town, were for him ; and no one on our side was strong enough to counterbalance the weight of these .grandees, or even to make any head against their influence ; and if one adds to this the pains he took beforehand to cultivate the goodwill of the chief men both in Parliament and the Chamber of Peers by means of parents, friends, mistresses, confessors, valets, promises, services, it will be clear that with a First President like Harlay at the head of this faction, we had a business on hand incomparably too strong for us.”

The case was argued and reargued before the Parliament, and after various delays and postponements, during which Luxemburg himself died, and his son became the defendant, judgment was at last given in favour of the title dating from 1662, while the decision as to Luxemburg's claim to the title of 1581 was indefinitely postponed. Thus things were left pretty much as they were before.

Saint Simon's indignation at this verdict is almost ludicrous. By his account, the peers would have won their suit, in spite of the formidable odds against them, had it not been for the villainy of Harlay, the First

President (or, as we might say, the Lord Chancellor), who had sold his influence to the opposite party; and then, by way of revenge, he paints Harlay's character for us in the blackest colours. After doing unwilling justice to the President's knowledge of the law and his profound and varied learning, he speaks of his "pharisaical austerity" and his craft as a politician, and then he concludes—

"He was destitute of real honour, secretly depraved in morals, with only a show of honesty, without even humanity,—in a word, a perfect hypocrite; without a faith, without a law, without a God, and without a soul; a cruel husband, a barbarous father, a tyrannical brother; no one's friend but his own; wicked by nature; taking delight in insulting, outraging, and crushing (others), and having never, during all his life, missed a chance of doing so.¹

¹ Saint Simon says, "It is a pity some one has not made a *Harleiana* of all his sayings, which would show the character of this cynic, and would be amusing at the same time." He has done his best to supply this want himself; and of the many stories he tells us of the caustic humour of the First President, the following is too good to be omitted. "The Duchess of La Ferté went to him [Harlay] to ask an audience, and, like every one else, had a taste of his temper. As she was leaving, she complained to her man of business, and called the First President 'an old baboon.' He was following her all the while, but did not say a word. At last she saw him behind her, but hoped that he had not overheard, and, without giving any sign of having done so, he put her in her carriage.

"Shortly afterwards her suit came on (before Harlay), and she unexpectedly gained her cause. Off she ran to the First President's house, and made him all kinds of acknowledgments. He—all humble and modest—made her a deep reverence, and then looking her straight in the face,—'Madame,' said he in a loud voice before everybody, 'I am very glad that an old baboon (*un vieux singe*) has been able to give some pleasure to an old she-monkey (*une veille guenon*).' And then, in his humblest manner, without saying another word, he gave her his hand to conduct her to her carriage. The Duchess would have liked to have killed him or died herself."

"In appearance he was a small man, wiry and vigorous ; with a lozenge-shaped face, a long aquiline nose, fine-speaking, piercing eyes that only looked at you askance, but which, if fixed on a client or a magistrate, were like to make him sink into the ground. He wore a robe that was somewhat short, collar and wristbands plaited like those of a priest's, a brown wig mixed with white, well stuffed but short, with a great cap above it. He stooped, and walked a little bent, with a studied air more humble than modest, and continually scraped along the walls to make people give way to him with greater noise ; and at Versailles made his way with respectful, and, as it were, shamefaced bows to the right and left."

About this time Saint Simon married a daughter of the Marshal de Lorges, and to her excellent qualities of head as well as heart he owed, he says, the chief happiness of his life. He describes her as being "fair, with a perfect complexion and figure, and with a bearing at once extremely noble and modest, and with a something I know not what of majesty, tempered with an air of virtue and natural sweetness."¹ The wedding was celebrated in the Church of St Roch, and the curious may still see in the parish register the signatures of the bride and bridegroom,—Saint Simon's in a bold, large hand, very unlike his usual small, neat writing ; and the bride's in a school-girl's copperplate style. There was a grand banquet after the ceremony, a *levée* the next morning, and in the evening they were invited to

¹ The 'Mercurie Galant'—the 'Morning Post' of that day—does justice to the bride's personal appearance, and adds that she had "a beauty of soul, such as a person of quality ought to have, that will make her a fitting match for her husband the duke—one of the wisest and most accomplished seigneurs of the Court." It is not often that Saint Simon gets such high compliments from contemporary journals.

supper at Versailles, where Louis received the young duchess in his most gracious and stately manner.

For obvious reasons Saint Simon did not choose to serve again under Luxemburg. Accordingly he changed his regiment and joined the army of the Rhine under his father-in-law, the Marshal de Lorges. But he tells us very little about this campaign, beyond the Marshal's dangerous illness, when Saint Simon saved the old man's life by administering "a hundred and thirty English drops," which, we are told, had "an astonishing effect." In Flanders, he says that a large part of the Prince of Orange's army under Vaudemont might have been easily surrounded and cut off, had it not been for the cowardice of the Duke of Maine, the king's favourite son. Message after message was sent him from headquarters, urging him to attack the enemy; but he "stammered out excuses," and allowed Vaudemont's force to make good their retreat.¹ "All our army were in despair," Saint Simon adds, "and both officers and men made no scruple of expressing their indignation and contempt."

It was some time before the king heard of his son's poltroonery, for Villeroy was far too good a courtier to tell all he knew in his despatches, and his subordinates held their tongues. At last Louis suspected something of the real state of the case, and cross-questioned Lavienne, one

¹ Here, again, we are told that Saint Simon has been led away by his hatred of "the Bastard." Two eyewitnesses of what occurred—Berwick and Saint Hilaire—give an entirely different version of the story, and attribute the delay in the attack to Marshal Villeroy, and not to the Duke of Maine—(see Chéruel, p. 625). Macaulay accepts Saint Simon's account (as he usually does) without scruple or question—(History, iv. 587).

of his valets, who reluctantly told him the whole story. Louis's anger and mortification were extreme.

"This prince, outwardly so calm and such a master of his slightest movements, even when events touched him most nearly, succumbed on this single occasion. As he was leaving the table at Marly with all the ladies, and in the presence of all the courtiers, he saw a servant who, while clearing away the dessert, put a biscuit in his pocket. In an instant the king forgets all his dignity, and with a cane in his hand which they had just brought him with his hat, he rushes upon the valet, who was not in the least expecting such an attack, strikes him, abuses him, and breaks the cane upon his shoulders (as a matter of fact it was only of rose-wood, and did not resist in the least). And then, with the handle in his hand, and with the air of a man who cannot contain himself, and all the time abusing this valet, who was by this time a long way off, he crossed the smaller *salon* and an antechamber, and entered Madame de Maintenon's room, where he remained nearly an hour, as he often did at Marly after dinner. As he was leaving her room to pass to his own, he saw Père la Chaise, and as soon as he perceived him among the crowd of courtiers—'My father,' he said in a loud voice, 'I have just beaten a rascal and have broken my cane on his back, but I do not believe that I have offended God'—and then he told the story of the pretended offence. All who were present trembled still more at what they had just seen and heard."

After the Peace of Ryswick, Saint Simon's own regiment was disbanded with many others; and about the same time thirty-eight brigadiers of cavalry were gazetted at once, but he looked in vain for his own name among the list. Five younger officers, who had probably paid a large sum for their promotion, were placed over his head, and in disgust he threw up his

commission—acting, he tells us, by the advice of some of his older friends. He wrote a civil letter to the king, making ill-health the excuse for having left the service. But Louis was annoyed, as he always was when any officer sent in his resignation. “See, Monsieur, here is another man who is leaving us,” he remarked to the Secretary of War, on reading Saint Simon’s letter; and it was long, we are told, before he forgot or forgave what he regarded as a personal slight. For years Saint Simon received no invitations to Marly—and there was no surer sign of royal disfavour.

CHAPTER IV.

VERSAILLES.

SAINT SIMON does unwilling justice—if indeed he can be said to do justice at all—to Louis XIV.'s character. He tells us that “he had received from God ability enough to be a good king, and possibly a sufficiently great king,”¹ but that he had been corrupted by “the mortal poison of flattery ;” that he was supremely vain and selfish ; that his education had been neglected ; that history, law, and science were sealed books to him ; and that he disliked and discouraged anything like superior talent in others.

Socially (even by Saint Simon's account), Louis was the first gentleman of his day—a king among men. Every accomplishment seemed to come naturally to him. He was a good dancer, a skilful tennis-player, a bold rider, and a first-rate marksman.

“ His figure, his carriage, the grace, the beauty, and the grand bearing which exceeded the beauty, even to the sound of his voice and mode of speaking, and the natural and majestic grace of his whole person, made him as remarkable, even up to the day of his death, as the queen bee of the hive

¹ Mazarin, who knew Louis XIV. better than Saint Simon did, declared that “he had stuff enough in him to make four kings and an honest man.”

(*le roi des abeilles*) ; and if he had only been an ordinary person, he would have equally had the talent for *fêtes*, for pleasures, for gallantry, and for the distractions of love.

“ Never did any one give with a better grace, and thereby enhance so largely the value of his gifts. Never did any one give such distinction to his words, his smiles—nay, to his very looks. He made everything precious by making it choice and majestic, and to this the rarity and brevity of his words added not a little. If he addressed any one,—a question it might be, or some commonplace remark,—all the bystanders noticed the favoured individual : it was an honour about which one talked, and which always became a sort of consideration. It was the same with all his attentions and distinctions, and with the preferences so exactly proportioned to each person’s merits. Never did he so far forget himself as to say anything disobliging of anybody ; and if he had to find fault, to reprimand, or to correct (which was seldom the case), it was always with an air of kindness, rarely with harshness or severity, and never with anger.”

Louis wished that Versailles should absorb the nobility of France. All the great nobles held offices in the household, which made their constant presence necessary ; and a town had grown up around the palace, where each of them had his separate establishment. To such men the country was regarded as a desert, to which no one would be banished if he could help it. Thus, while between Paris and Versailles there was an endless stream of coaches and carriages passing and repassing, along the highroad between Paris and Orleans the traveller would meet nothing but a few peasants’ carts, some soldiers on the march, or a messenger posting towards the frontier. “ All France was there,” is a common expression of Saint Simon’s, in referring to some Court ceremonial : and assuredly all the life and splendour of

the time was to be found at Versailles. At every *levée* the king looked right and left of him, with a glance that nothing could escape, and showed marked disapprobation of those who did not present themselves regularly. If a favour was asked for any of these absentees,—“Who is he?” was the reply. “I don’t know him. He is a man I never see.” His memory in these cases was never at fault. He would recognise, says Saint Simon, some ordinary person whom he had perhaps only seen once, after the lapse of twenty years, and would not only remember his face, but the circumstances of their last interview.

Saint Simon could no more have lived away from Versailles than a man in modern society could be away from London in the season; and though, as has been said, he had too much temper, and too much honour, to play the courtier himself,¹ Court life had special and irresistible attractions for him. Versailles was, so to speak, his hunting-ground,—the arena where he watched with insatiable curiosity the great human drama with all its varying scenes—the plots and counterplots—the intrigues and ambitions—the rise and fall of courtier after courtier—the passions and vanities of this little world, and all its medley of tragedy and farce. The study of character seems to have had an ever-increasing fascination for him, and to have consoled him in a measure for his own isolation among the brilliant throng of nobles and princes, most of whom he so cordially hated and despised. These “insects of the Court,” as he disdain-

¹ It was of Antin that the Regent Orleans said, “Voila comme un vrai courtier devoit être—sans humeur et sans honneur.” If we reverse the proposition, it will exactly apply to Saint Simon.

fully terms them, had a scientific value in his eyes, for they could be analysed and dissected by the man who could read their hearts ; their vices and their virtues could be weighed in the balance ; and every word and gesture could be scrutinised and referred to its originating motive. Accordingly it was in the moments of some supreme agony or crisis, when the most practised actor was forced to drop his mask for the time being and show himself for once in his real character, that Saint Simon's powers of observation were excited to their keenest point, and he then became all eyes and ears to mark and note the scene as it passed before him.

“ It must be confessed,” he says, “ that for him who knows the Court to its inmost corners, the first sight of rare spectacles of this kind,¹ so interesting in so many different points of view, gives an extreme satisfaction. Each face recalls to you the cares, the intrigues, the intense labour employed in the advancement and formation of fortunes by the aid of cabals ; the skill used to hold one's own ground and get rid of others ; the means of all kinds employed to that end ; the intimacies more or less advanced ; the estrangements, the coldnesses, the hatreds, the ill turns, the intrigues, the overtures, the diplomacy, the meanness, the baseness of each ; the disconcertment of some when half-way on their road, or in the midst, or at the height of their expectations ; all this medley of living objects and of such important details give to him who knows how to receive it a pleasure which, hollow as it may seem, is one of the greatest that you can enjoy at Court.”

It may perhaps help to explain the ideas and associations which Saint Simon attaches to this hateful word “ courtier,” if we take the character selected by himself,

¹ He is speaking of the famous scene at Versailles after Monseigneur's death—see p. 152.

and by Sainte Beuve after him, as their type of the courtier *par excellence*. This was Antin, the only legitimate son of Madame de Montespan, and the half-brother of the Dukes of Maine and Toulouse. It is clear, even by Saint Simon's account, that Antin had been singularly gifted with almost every mental and bodily accomplishment that a man can need to hold his own in society,—a fine presence, charming manners, talent, learning, knowledge of the world, powers of conversation, wit and humour; and, above all, he had what is perhaps the rarest of all social virtues—“never did he chance to speak ill of any one.” But Saint Simon would have us believe that Antin, with all his fascinating qualities, was “an impudent Gascon,”—base, false, and avaricious—a gambler, a cheat, and, above all, a coward. He had turned his back in the day of battle, and had accepted the grossest insults without venturing to retaliate, and that at a time when courage was the first instinct of a nobleman, and when cowardice was a brand on a man's character that nothing could efface. “It was looked upon as disgraceful,” says Saint Simon, “to insult Antin,”—just as it would be now to strike a woman.

Still, in spite of his shortcomings, there can be no doubt that Antin was the most popular man of the day. He had contrived to make himself so useful and agreeable to all parties at Court that he was equally at home both at Meudon and Versailles. The king liked his lively conversation and his knowledge of life and character; and Monseigneur always found him good company, and ready to gamble from night till morning. As an instance of the trouble he took to ingratiate himself with Madame de Maintenon, Saint Simon tells us that,

when she visited him at Petit Bourg, she found her boudoir arranged as an exact duplicate of her own room at Versailles—the same decorations, the same pictures, the same flowers, and even the same books, lying open in the same place. But even this delicate attention did not mollify the great lady, for she went out of her way to sneer at his complaisance before she left Petit Bourg. Louis was more easily pleased, and admired all he saw.

“Everything was highly approved of, except an avenue of chestnut-trees, which, though they looked marvellously well from the gardens, blocked up the view from the window of the king’s room. Antin said not a word ; but when the king awoke the next morning, and looked out of his window, he saw the most charming view in the world, and no avenue in sight, and no trace of there having been one in the place where he had seen it the night before. Nor were there any traces of workmen nor of removal along the whole length of the line, nor in any part of the gardens near it. It was as if the avenue had never existed. No one had heard any noise or disturbance in the night ; the trees had disappeared, and the earth was so completely levelled that it seemed as if the transformation must have been produced by the wand of some beneficent fairy in this enchanted castle.”

We have selected Antin as being the type of his class, but Saint Simon would tell us that there were a thousand like him, or even worse than him, incessantly hanging about the Court ; and it was the sight of such men daily receiving honours and rewards, and all the good things of this life, that rankled so deeply in his mind. Added to this was the sense of his own unrequited merits, and of his powerlessness to remedy the evil and injustice of the case. These feelings explain, and in some degree excuse, the bitter and uncharitable tone of many

of his portraits. Christian as he was, he could not be at charity with men whom he believed to be hypocrites and rascals. “One is charmed,” he says, “with true and honest men ; one is irritated against the scoundrels who swarm at Court, still more against those who have done us an injury. The Stoic is a fine and noble chimera. I don’t pique myself on impartiality, and I should vainly try to do so.” In fact, it was a point of conscience with him, if he described such men as Antin at all, to describe them as he saw them, not as they appeared to their ignorant and foolish admirers,—to strip off the mask that concealed their features, and lay bare every secret corner of their hearts ; to paint them in their true colours, not to gloss over their foibles and their vices ; to paint them (if we may borrow Macaulay’s illustration), as Lely painted Cromwell, with all his warts and wrinkles, or as Rembrandt painted his burgomaster, with every line and shadow traced by time upon his face,—and not to give us a gallery of portraits insipid and unreal, and unlike the actual men.

There is no doubt that, in many instances, Saint Simon has over-coloured these portraits : indeed we may trust, for the credit of humanity, that the courtiers of his day were not quite the angels of darkness that he represents them, and that there was more honour and honesty to be found among them than he is willing to allow. But just as Carlyle discovered “shams” in almost every phase of modern life, and as Thackeray invented “snobs” to fill up his forty chapters,—so Saint Simon has made the most of his grand topic for reproof and scorn and denunciation, and has selected “the courtier” as his text for a hundred sermons.

There are two famous chapters in La Bruyère, where he describes the Court and fashion of the day much in the same bitter and satirical spirit. Like our writer, La Bruyère maintains that the courtier's name is legion—an inexhaustible species, embracing all kinds and degrees of gilded servitude, from "the satellites of Jupiter," the most favoured personal friends of royalty, to the humbler but not less ambitious parasites, who hang about the anterooms and galleries on the chance of a passing look or smile from their patrons.

In fact, the courtier's life at Versailles was a faint reflection of the king's. From the moment that he opened his eyes in the morning till he closed them at night, Louis was always (so to speak) on parade—in full-dress order. He could not even take his medicine or eat his broth if he was ill, without an usher first summoning the *grande entrée*; and every detail of his ordinary life was regulated, as Saint Simon tells us, by the most tedious etiquette. Even his *levée* was a long and stately ceremony—a kind of drama in five acts; and his toilet took place in the presence of a large audience, when one favoured courtier would hold the candlestick, another would take the towel after his Majesty had washed his hands, while to hand the shirt was a privilege reserved for a prince of the blood-royal. Then came private audiences; and shortly afterwards the captain of the guard threw open the folding doors of the cabinet, and Louis walked along the gallery that led to the chapel, bowing right and left to the line of courtiers as he passed them.

Mass was then celebrated, and the courtiers gazed with all their eyes on the king as he remained on his knees

before the altar. “One cannot help seeing a sort of subordination in their worship,” says La Bruyère, “for the people seem to adore the prince, and the prince to adore God.”

When Mass was over the king returned to his private room, and his Ministers followed him with their portfolios; and on four mornings of the week he held a cabinet council—latterly always in Madame de Maintenon’s room. Dinner was served at one o’clock. Except when he was with the army, no man under the rank of a prince of the blood ever dined with the king: the courtiers remained standing behind his chair; and even his brother, “Monsieur,” was only occasionally honoured with a seat at the same table. The king had a royal appetite, and his dinner always consisted of several rich soups and four or five courses of meat, concluding with dessert, ices, and sweetmeats.¹ “If he made me eat half as much as he eats himself, I should not be long alive,” wrote Madame de Maintenon in 1713.

When dinner was over, the king entered his cabinet again, fed his dogs, changed his dress (again in public), and then went down by the private stairs to the marble court, where his coach was waiting. Sometimes, instead of driving, he would go out hunting, though he gave this up latterly, or shoot in the park, or drive a four-in-hand through the forest of Fontainebleau; and we are told that no professional coachman ever handled the reins with such skill and grace. As he grew older, his exercise

¹ “I have often,” writes Madame de Bavière, “seen the king eat four plates of different soups, a whole pheasant, a partridge, a large plate of salad, two good slices of ham, a plate of pastry, and then be helped more than once to fruit and sweetmeats.”

generally took the form of a promenade round the gardens, where he would feed the carp, watch the fountains playing, and chat with his gardener, Le Nôtre ; and often for four or five hours his courtiers had to follow his Majesty in all weathers up and down the long terraces, with their heads only sheltered by their periwigs ; but, as the Abbé de Polignac once said, when Louis hoped that his purple dress would not be spoiled by a sudden shower—"It is nothing, Sire ; the rain of Marly never wets one." It was only at Marly that the king ever gave the welcome order, "Your hats, gentlemen," when they all covered.

Sometimes, instead of the stately promenade, there would be a picnic (*fête champêtre*), or a garden-party, when tents were pitched under the trees of Saint Germain, or in one of the long alleys at Fontainebleau ; or the courtiers rowed in gondolas along the broad canal at Versailles, and did not return till after sunset.

At Marly the ladies of the Court always had supper at the royal table ; but here again everything was regulated by the strictest etiquette. One evening Madame de Torcy (the Minister's wife) happened to come in late, and took a seat that was vacant above the Duchess de Duvas. Louis almost petrified her with a look of anger and astonishment, and complained to Madame de Maintenon afterwards that he had never seen such "incredible insolence on the part of a little *bourgeoise*." He constantly reverted to the subject, and did not—so Saint Simon says—recover his equanimity for three whole days.

After supper the long gallery and the whole of that magnificent suite of rooms were lighted up with countless chandeliers, and the splendour of the scene can only

be faintly realised from the pictures left to us of the time—the laced ruffles, the silken coats, and gold embroidery worn by the courtiers, and the ladies' dresses sparkling (as a writer describes them) like a rich espalier of pearls, gold, jewels, flowers, and fruits. Sometimes there would be a fancy ball or a masquerade, when the maids of honour represented the seasons of the year, or some scene from mythology ; or a fair, where the ladies kept stalls and sold curiosities from China and Japan ; or a lottery, where Louis distributed jewels and trinkets to the winners of lucky numbers. In 1700 there was a ball every night for three weeks ; and Saint Simon says, “One did not leave till eight o'clock in the morning. I was heartily glad when Lent came, and remained almost dead with fatigue for two or three days, and Madame de Saint Simon could hardly get over Shrove-Tuesday.”

As to the games of chance played on ordinary evenings, their names are as numerous as those played by Gargantua himself. Lansquenet, piquet, ombre, brelan, basset, are a few out of the many mentioned ; and in Saint Simon's own country-house (as we learn by the inventory of the furniture) there were six tables devoted to different games in one room. Some cool-headed players like Dangeau, who combined luck with skill, would win a hundred thousand francs at basset in ten days. Others, like Antin, were supposed to aid fortune by occasional cheating.

“‘Pray, Monseigneur,’ asked the king one day of his son, ‘is it true that while you were playing and gaining heavily, you gave your hat to Antin to hold while you threw your winnings into it, and that as you turned your head by chance, you surprised Antin pocketing the money ?’ Mon-

seigneur said nothing in reply, but only looked at the king and bowed his head to signify that it was even as he had said. ‘I understand you, Monseigneur,’ said the king. ‘I ask nothing more about it.’ And thereupon they separated.”¹

Certainly some of the stories told us by Saint Simon reveal an undercurrent of coarseness and ill-breeding, which we should hardly have suspected to have lain hid under the solemn formalities of the most stately Court in history. We hear of the princesses borrowing pipes and tobacco from the Swiss guards, and holding a sort of orgie when the king had retired for the night, or letting off crackers under Monsieur’s windows at midnight, to his great indignation ; we hear of one great lady calling another a wine-sack, and the other replying that it was better to be a wine-sack than a rag-sack ; we hear of the Duchess of Berry being carried to bed drunk after a supper-party, and of the “Grand Squire” grossly insulting a Grand Duchess at Monseigneur’s card-table.

Human nature needs some relief from perpetual constraint, and as the gravest kings had their jesters to amuse their idle moments, so at Versailles there were professed buffoons and butts for ridicule, ready-made to endure every sort of insult and practical joke, without venturing on resistance or retaliation. A creature of this kind was the Princess d’Harcourt—“a sort of personage,” says Saint Simon, “whom it is a good thing to make known, in order to know more thoroughly a

¹ Saint Simon’s authority for this story is the first squire, who told it to him “with an air of ravishment,” having heard it himself from one of the valets.

Court which did not scruple to receive such beings ; ” and then he describes her : “ Tall, fat, the colour of milk-porridge, with thick ugly lips, and hair like tow. . . . Dirty and sluttish, always intriguing, pretending, attempting, always quarrelling, she was a white fury—nay more, she was a Harpy, for she had all the effrontery, the wickedness, the deceit and violence of one, as well as its avarice and greediness.”

Although nominally a *dévote* of Madame de Maintenon’s type, this princess cheated at cards in the most barefaced manner, and stormed and screamed if detected. She flew into fits of blind passion on the smallest provocation, and abused and beat her servants, until one stalwart chambermaid retaliated, locked the door, and then belaboured her mistress with a broom-handle till she howled for mercy. One cold winter’s night, some of the more mischievous courtiers, headed by Saint Simon’s model prince, the Duke of Burgundy, got into her room and pelted her with snowballs.

“ This filthy creature in her bed, roused from sleep with a start, bruised and drenched with the snow all over her ears and head, dishevelled, screaming at the top of her voice, and wriggling like an eel, without knowing where to hide herself, was a sight that diverted them all for more than half an hour ; so that the nymph floated in her bed, while the water, trickling from it on all sides, flooded the whole room. It was enough to make one burst with laughter. The next day she sulked and was laughed at more than ever.”

It is hardly credible that this brutality should have occurred at Versailles ; yet Saint Simon describes the scene as if he had himself taken part in it. To half-drown a defenceless woman with snow on a winter’s

night is a piece of malicious horseplay, that might have come naturally from Panurge or Friar John, but seems strangely out of place in a Court celebrated for the perfection of fine manners, where the king would gravely take his hat off to the humblest chambermaid, and in an age when vice itself was supposed to have “lost half its evil by losing all its grossness.”

“Would to God,” says Saint Simon, “that Madame de Maintenon had only women like Madame de Dangeau about her!” He describes most of her friends and favourites as having no redeeming qualities except extreme servility and *dévotion à l'outrance*. For instance, there was the family of Heudicourt, all of whom seemed to have been well received at Court. Of the mother, Saint Simon says no one could possibly have been “more gratuitously, more continuously, more desperately wicked.” Her husband was “an old rascal, extremely debauched, and the son was a species of satyr as wicked as, and even uglier than, the father; a great drunkard, yet irresistible with the ladies, who worshipped him, and always spoke of him as ‘the good little fellow.’”

Another charming creature, who “was at all the Marlys, although the horror of all the world,” was the Princess de Montauban, who we are told was “hump-backed, all on one side, extremely ugly, and covered with white paint, rouge, and blue lines to mark the veins, tricked out with patches, ornaments, and trinkets, which she kept on till more than eighty, when she died. Nothing was so shameless, so dissolute, so greedy, so strangely wicked as this sort of monster, although she had plenty of talent of the worst kind, and could often make herself agreeable when it pleased her.”

Space forbids our dwelling further on these pictures of the ladies of the Court—still less can we follow Saint Simon through those “ laughable adventures,” those “ ridiculous situations,” those “ pleasant anecdotes,” that so often form the headings of his chapters. Those who make the search for themselves will be well repaid for their trouble. Nothing in Molière’s comedies is more ludicrous than some of these scenes from Court life : Madame de Rupelmonde playing cards in the crowded drawing-room at Marly, and gravely ordered to go to bed by the Swiss groom of the chambers ; the old Madame de St Herem, who was so afraid of thunder that she used to get under her bed and make all her servants get on top of it, piled one above the other, and who had love made to her in rather too demonstrative a fashion by an escaped lunatic (“she was hideous at eighteen, and was then eighty,” says Saint Simon, parenthetically) ; the romantic love-story of La Coetlogon ; the troubles of La Meilleraye, whose husband, St Ruth, kept her in order with a cudgel ; the eccentricities of Lauzun ; the pranks of Coislin and Courcillon,—all these are some of the “ bagatelles ” which Saint Simon apologises for recounting, but which, as he justly says, give life and reality to his picture of the times.

CHAPTER V.

PRINCES AND PRINCESSES.

No spot of country is at once so interesting and so melancholy as the valley of the Seine round Paris. Each hill and village, as we see them from the railroad, recalls its memories of the past ; each palace and chateau are associated with the reign of the great king ; and wherever we tread in this region, “a history is beneath our feet.” Versailles in its lonely magnificence ; the deserted Trianons ; the valley of Port Royal, as desolate as Glencoe itself ; the ruined walls of Saint Cyr ; Marly, almost buried in the forest, where only a few green mounds mark the site of Louis’s favourite retreat ; Saint Cloud, once “the home of all delights,” now a heap of blackened ruins ; Saint Germains, the most picturesque of all, with the long terrace along which James II. walked, now disfigured by a hotel, and the galleries where Henry IV. held his Court, vulgarised by a museum ; the vast palace of the Condés at Chantilly gone for ever, and their hunting-lodge only left to its present owner ; Sceaux, so famous for its *fêtes* and brilliant society, demolished to make room for a school of agriculture,—turn where we will, there is the same story of neglect, or desecration, or destruction.

But, in Saint Simon's time, each of these palaces was Versailles on a smaller scale. Le Nôtre had planned the park, and laid out the gardens ; Mansard had designed the rooms ; Le Brun had painted the ceilings ; a royal prince held his Court there, with his own set of courtiers, his parasites, his lackeys, his troops of servants and retainers. There was an endless stream of visitors, who passed much as they do now from one country-house to another,—great hunting-parties, balls and masquerades, and gambling protracted to the small hours of the morning. Saint Cloud seems to have been the most popular of all these abodes of royalty. It served as a half-way house between Paris and Versailles, and was constantly filled with nobles going to or coming from the Court. “The pleasures of every kind of game, the singular beauty of the place itself, with a thousand carriages standing ready for the legions of sightseers, the music, the good cheer—all this,” says Saint Simon, “made of it a palace of delights.”

The master of Saint Cloud was Monsieur, the king's brother, the noisiest and liveliest of the Bourbons—short, corpulent, without natural dignity, always steeped in perfumes and bedizened with jewellery, a great talker, and a great glutton,—affable and polite, and good-natured to excess. But, excepting that he had courage and a certain knowledge of the world, he was absolutely good for nothing,—a weak, suspicious, meddlesome busybody.

Monsieur's first wife was Henrietta of England, a charming and accomplished princess, but she had died suddenly in 1670. Then he had married the daughter of the Elector Palatine, generally known as “Madame de Bavière,” who was as masculine in her habits as her hus-

band was effeminate. She was German at heart, and never really domesticated herself in her French home. All her affections turned to her beloved Heidelberg, where she would rather (she says) have a good plate of sour-kraut and smoked sausages than all the delicacies you could offer her. While Monsieur was hunting, or entertaining his friends at Saint Cloud, Madame was taking long solitary walks, or writing interminable letters in a little back room with German paladins depicted on the tapestry, or talking with her little German maid Bessola.

Saint Simon always speaks respectfully of Madame. Although she had “the figure and the roughness of a Swiss guard,” she was true and honest—sincere both in her likes and dislikes—and these were rare qualities at Versailles. Moreover, she shared his abhorrence of Madame de Maintenon. “All the evil,” she says, “that has yet been written of this diabolical woman, still falls short of the actual truth.” She especially disliked to see the young princesses waiting upon the great lady, handing her the dishes and changing the plates. Madame looked on in silent indignation, and when asked to help them—“*I have not been brought up to such mean services,*” she answered, “and am too old to give myself up to such child’s play.”

Madame’s pride suffered a severe blow in 1692. The king had determined that her son, then the Duke de Chartres and afterwards the Regent Orleans, should marry Mademoiselle de Blois—one of his illegitimate daughters. Naturally enough, Madame’s strict notions of propriety were outraged by the mere thought of such a *mésalliance*, but she could not help herself.

Louis had set his heart on the marriage ; neither her husband nor her son dared to say a word against it ; and Madame had to give her consent,—which she gave, says Saint Simon, “with tears in her eyes and fury in her heart.” The same evening—

“I found all the world talking in little groups, and great astonishment depicted on every face. Madame kept walking up and down the gallery with her favourite maid of honour—striding along with great steps, her handkerchief in her hand, talking and gesticulating in a loud tone, and acting admirably the part of Ceres furiously searching for her daughter Proserpine, and demanding her back from Jupiter. Every one left the ground clear for her, and only passed through the gallery on their way to the drawing-room. Monseigneur and Monsieur had sat down to lansquenet ; and never was anything so shamefaced and utterly disconcerted as Monsieur’s countenance and whole appearance. His son (the Duke of Chartres) seemed in despair, and the bride-elect in the greatest sorrow and embarrassment.

“At supper the king showed his usual ease of manner. Madame’s eyes were full of tears, which fell from time to time, though she dried them now and then, as she looked round at every face as if to see what they thought of it all. Her son also had his eyes very red, and neither of them could eat anything. I noticed that the king offered Madame nearly all the dishes in front of him, and that she refused them all with a rudeness which did not in the least diminish his air of respect and politeness. It was also much remarked that after leaving the table, and when the circle round his Majesty was dispersing, the king made a very marked and low reverence to Madame, during which she performed such a complete pirouette that the king, as he raised his head, found nothing but her back towards him, only removed a step nearer the door.

“The next morning Madame was at the *levée*, and her son approached her, as he did every day, to kiss her hand. But just then Madame gave him such a sounding box on the ear, that it was heard some paces off, and, delivered as it was in the presence of the whole Court, covered the unfortunate prince with confusion, and excited prodigious astonishment in the crowd of lookers-on, of whom I was one.”

Monsieur soon disappears from the Memoirs. His life of gluttony and dissipation had ruined his health; and one morning his confessor—“good little Father Trévoix”—told him plainly that *he* was not going to be damned on Monsieur’s account; that he must change his habits and take care of himself; that he was old, used-up, fat, short-necked, and to all appearances would die of apoplexy, and that very soon. These were terrible words (says Saint Simon) to a prince, “the most voluptuous and most attached to life that has ever been known;” and Monsieur said his prayers more frequently, grew *triste*, and talked less than usual—“that is to say, only about as much as three or four women.”

Shortly afterwards there was a scene between him and the king at Marly, in which both lost their tempers, and Monsieur came out from the interview with his face so flushed and inflamed with passion, that some of the ladies suggested he should be bled at once—“but more for the sake of saying something than anything else.” Unfortunately, however, his surgeon was old and not skilful with the lanceet,—“he had missed fire before.” Monsieur did not wish to be bled by him, and, in order not to vex him, would not be bled by any one else. The consequence was that he died of apoplexy the same evening. There was great consternation both at Marly

and Saint Cloud, and the usual confusion followed in the household—the women especially, “who had lost their amusement and consideration, running hither and thither, and shrieking with dishevelled hair like so many Bacchantes.” The king wept a good deal. Madame shut herself up in her room, and, “in the midst of her grief, kept calling out ‘No convent! Let no one speak of a convent! I will have nothing to do with a convent!’ This excellent princess had not lost her reason, for she knew by the terms of her marriage settlement that when she became a widow, she might choose between a chateau and a convent.” As a matter of fact she retired to neither one nor the other, but still lived on at Saint Cloud.

At Chantilly was the palace of the Condés, and here lived Henri de Bourbon, generally known as “M. le Prince,” the son of the great soldier of the Fronde. Saint Simon gives him a terribly bad character; all the nobler qualities of the “Grand Condé” seemed to have been distorted and perverted in his successor,—“an unnatural son, a cruel father, a terrible husband, a detestable master, a dangerous neighbour; without friendship and without friends, and incapable of having any.”

His unfortunate wife suffered terribly from his fits of passion; and although she was herself “disgustingly ugly, virtuous, and foolish,” this did not prevent her husband being jealous of her. He abused her, kicked and beat her, and dragged her about with him from place to place at all hours of the day and night. His own habits were most eccentric: he had always four dinners ready for him at his various country-houses—

but, Saint Simon says, none of them cost him much. Some soup and half a roast chicken was all that he ever ordered at each place.

In his earlier days he had been the Lothario of the Court, and we are told that the stories of his intrigues and love adventures would fill volumes. He would put on every sort of disguise to make his way to the fair lady of the hour. He spent millions on the Marchioness of Richelieu, and on one occasion hired the whole side of one of the streets near Saint Sulpice, furnished the houses, and then broke down the connecting walls to reach the place of rendezvous.

There was no end to the freaks he played on his unfortunate neighbours. One of them, by name Rose, refused to sell him a park that adjoined his property, whereupon M. le Prince turned three or four hundred foxes loose across the boundary walls of the estate. "You may imagine," says Saint Simon, "the disorder caused by this band of marauders, and the extreme surprise of Rose and his people at this inexhaustible swarm of foxes that had sprung up in a single night." Rose, however, was a man of spirit, and complained to the king, and his tormentor had to apologise, clear the ground of foxes, and repair damages.

In his later years M. le Prince was subject to all kinds of hallucinations. He fancied himself a dog, and would bark and snap at his valets; then he thought himself dead, and was with some difficulty persuaded by his doctor that dead men occasionally eat and drank. Some obliging persons were induced to pretend themselves to be dead, in order to get M. le Prince to eat his dinner in their company, and the "dialogues des

morts" that took place on these occasions nearly made his doctor expire with laughter. At last, to every one's great relief, in 1709, M. le Prince died in real earnest. "Not a soul regretted him; neither servants, nor friends, nor children, nor wife." Madame la Princesse—the poor, little, ugly, forsaken woman—did indeed shed some tears, but apologised for her inconsistency in doing so.

"M. le Duc," who succeeded to the family honours, only survived his father some eleven months. Like the rest of Condé's descendants, he was marvellously short,—like a gnome, with a monstrous head and a projecting stomach, and a complexion of a livid yellow. "He had an air so haughty and audacious, that one could hardly get accustomed to him. . . . All the furies seemed to torment him perpetually, and to make him as terrible as those wild animals which appear to be only created to devour and make war upon the human race." Even his pleasantry took a dangerous turn, and his guests at Chantilly lived in terror of their lives. He threw a plate at Count Fiesque's head for venturing to contradict him at table; and he poisoned Santeuil (a good-natured writer of *vers de société*) by emptying a box of Spanish snuff into his champagne-glass—"to see what the effect of it would be."¹ It was not long, adds Saint Simon, before he was enlightened, for the unfortunate poet died the same evening in horrible agony.

¹ This was not the first time that Santeuil had suffered from the high spirits of his fine friends at Chantilly. One evening at supper, Madame la Duchesse, affronted at some real or supposed neglect of his, boxed his ears, and then, on his looking angry, threw a glass of water in his face, observing pleasantly that it was only the rain after the thunder.

It is pleasant to turn from M. le Duc to Madame la Duchesse (a daughter of Louis by Madame de Montespan). Although Saint Simon both feared and hated her—and with some reason, as we shall see hereafter—he cannot help admiring her, and he has described her as “the queen of pleasure and delight, . . . with a figure formed by the tenderest loves,” and “with all the charms and all the dangers of the siren of the poets;” loving no one, and known to love no one, yet irresistible even with those who most hated her; yet, with all her attractions, cruel, heartless, and implacable—a faithless friend and a relentless enemy. How she reigned over the society at Meudon, and how she domineered over Monseigneur, will be told in another chapter.

CHAPTER VI.

MADAME DE MAINTENON.

MADAME DE MAINTENON is still the same *femme incomprise* that she was in her own day. No two critics agree in their estimate of her life and character. We have two pictures of her so utterly unlike, that they seem to describe two different persons ; the popular-one, drawn by Voltaire and Saint Simon, representing her as utterly false and unscrupulous, cruel and bigoted, a heartless adventuress—while from the other canvas there smiles upon us the gracious and beneficent foundress of Saint Cyr, the devoted wife, and the much-enduring and much-maligned keeper of the royal conscience. Which of these two portraits is the truer one, must be left to higher authorities to determine ; but, even taking her as we find her, on the evidence of her own letters, and accepting all that her apologists have found to say in her favour, we can only conclude, with Madame du Deffand, in conceiving “a high opinion of her mind, little esteem for her heart, and no taste for her person ; but a thorough belief in her sincerity.” Those again who read Saint Simon’s account of her, must remember that, in her case, he is the most partial and prejudiced

of witnesses. He hated her so intensely, that if she had possessed all the virtues and all the graces that ever fell to the lot of woman, she would still have been to him the widow Scarron who had made herself a queen. He never mentions her name without adding some term of abuse—"a creole," "an old sorceress," "an obscure and artful maid-servant," "a woman of the streets." Indeed he proves too much against his enemy. Had she been all that he says she was—a false and selfish *intriguante*, mean, narrow-minded, and thoroughly unscrupulous, "consistent only in her love of power"—she could hardly have been honoured and almost idolised by a prince like Louis, with his strong common-sense and keen insight into character. Saint Simon would say that he was bewitched by this enchantress. Yes; but would the charm have lasted thirty years? During all these years we find nothing but the most devoted respect and attachment on one side, and the most unwearyed care and solicitude on the other. If Madame de Maintenon was nothing better than Becky Sharp on a grander scale, surely time must have found her out. An adventuress cannot keep on the mask for ever.

But putting her character aside for the present, no romance ever contained incidents so strange as the realities of her life. The daughter of a broken spendthrift—"peut-être gentilhomme," says Saint Simon—born in a prison on a foreign island; so sickly as an infant, that she was once nearly thrown into the sea for dead on the homeward voyage; then left a penniless orphan, and earning her livelihood as a half-starved drudge in a relative's household,—feeding the poultry and measuring out the corn; then imprisoned in a convent, and perse-

cuted by nuns and priests to change her creed ; afterwards married out of pity by Scarron, a crippled and deformed buffoon-rhymester (*cul-de-jatte*), but in a few years left a widow in the prime of her beauty, and thrown upon the world without money and without position,—such was the story, briefly told, of the early life of Francoise d'Aubigné, afterwards known in history as Madame de Maintenon.

Saint Simon hints at scandals connected with her life in the days of her widowhood ; indeed he names several of her more favoured admirers, and the fact of her intimate friendship with Ninon de l'Enclos certainly tells against her.¹ But in this point her very faults probably saved her from temptation. She was too cold, too selfish,—“trop gauche pour l'amour,” as Ninon said,¹—and too greedy of reputation, ever to give way to any warmer feeling than that of sentiment. She could nurse a sick friend, she could sympathise with sorrow, she could compassionate suffering, she could devote herself to children, she could write charming letters brimful of tears and sensibility,—but she was incapable of love. For the one absorbing idea of her life was, that all men should speak well of her ; and she set herself to work to please and fascinate the society in which she found herself at the Hotel d'Albret and the Hotel Richelieu, just as she afterwards made it her business first to captivate and

¹ M. Feuillet de Conches has in his possession the original of a letter, written by Ninon to Saint Evremond, which ends thus : “S. [Scarron] estoit mon amy ; sa fame m'a donné mille plaisirs par sa conversation et, dans le tems, je l'ai trouvé trop gauche pour l'amour. Quant aux détails, je ne scay rien, mais je lui ai prestay souvent ma chambre jaune à elle et à Villarseaux.”—Causeries d'un Curieux, ii. 588.

then to interest and amuse her royal husband. In one of her letters she tells us the secret of her popularity in these days. "Women liked me," she says, "because I was pleasant in company, and troubled myself more about others than myself; and men followed me because I had the beauty and the grace of youth. Indeed, the taste they had for me was more in the way of a general friendship than love." So charming did she make herself, that her confessor once ordered her "to be wearisome in society" by way of penance.

But all this time, in spite of her fine friends and social distinctions, she was fighting a hard battle against poverty. Scarron's death had left her with little more than the four traditional *louis d'or* which she is said to have brought him by way of dowry; and the pension which the poet had received from the Government, was refused to his widow. She had barely sufficient money to buy food and clothing. At last, in 1664, came the crisis of her life. She happened to meet Madame de Montespan—the reigning sultana—at the Hotel d'Albret, and the great lady was so charmed with her new acquaintance that she prevailed on Louis to grant her a pension. Soon afterwards "the widow Scarron" was appointed governess to Montespan's children, secretly borne by her to the king; and as a reward for the unceasing care and devotion with which she reared them from infancy to childhood, she received the estate and title of Maintenon. But in these days Louis regarded her with little favour. His presents to her had been made on the express condition that he should never see or hear of her again: "the creature," as he called his future wife, "was insufferable," and he had already given her far more than she deserved. The

first sign of his prejudice giving way was the pleasure he showed in reading some of her letters, giving an account of his children's health, and their visits to various watering-places ; and, even on the most trivial subjects, few writers (as Saint Simon is obliged to admit) could express themselves so simply, so pleasantly, and yet so eloquently.¹ Then by degrees his Majesty found that the lady could talk even more pleasantly than she wrote ; that there was a *solidité* about her conversation rarely found among her frivolous sex ; that her temper never varied ; that her manners had an incomparable charm ; and that her intelligence and good sense soothed and refreshed him after all he had endured from the moods and humours of Madame de Montespan. And thus by degrees she became necessary to his comfort and convenience ; he resorted to her for assistance in his doubts and difficulties ; she almost took the place of his confessor ; she lectured him on the frailties of his past life ; and the two would sit for hours together, evening after evening,—she talking earnestly and gravely, while he listened to her in rapt attention.

Other circumstances contributed to increase her influence. Louis had passed the prime of life, and time had sobered the strong passions of his youth. Warnings, moreover, had come to him in various shapes. His

¹ Napoleon read her letters at St Helena, and said of them, “The style, the grace, the purity of the language enchant me. I think I prefer them to those of Madame de Sévigné—they tell you more (*elles vous disent plus de choses*).”

Madame de Maintenon left fourteen volumes of letters behind her, and a complete edition of them is now being edited by M. Théophile Lavallée—complete, that is, as she left them ; but she seems to have herself purposely destroyed many of the most important.

confessor had reminded him of the scandal and danger of living in mortal sin ; Bourdaloue had not scrupled to apply to him, from the pulpit, the story of David and Uriah ; and the sight of his last victim, Fontanges, a girl of eighteen, dying suddenly and miserably, touched him with keen remorse, and served to complete the good work begun by Madame de Maintenon. At length Madame de Montespan, although furious with indignation at being so treacherously supplanted by an “elderly governess,” as she called her rival, saw herself that her reign was over, and she finally left Versailles in 1686, never to return.

Saint Simon touches on Montespan’s subsequent history with what is for him an unusually gentle hand. “It was years,” he says, “before she could accustom herself to a life of retreat. She carried her leisure and restlessness about with her from place to place. At last God touched her heart. Her sin had never been accompanied by forgetfulness. She used often to leave the king, to pray in her own chamber.” And now it seemed as if no penance and humiliation could be too severe — the roughest clothing or the coarsest food ; but perhaps the most terrible atonement of all was that insisted on by her confessor—to ask her husband to receive her again on any terms. She wrote him a humble letter, as she was bidden ; but his only answer was, that he neither wished to see her face nor hear her name again.

Still, even in her retirement, she seems to have been a person much sought after. Her house was filled incessantly by a stream of visitors. “All France used to go there,” says Saint Simon, “and she received her guests with the air and manner of a queen, . . .

beautiful as the day to the last hour of her life ; " still charming all hearers with that graceful play of wit peculiar to her family, and known as the *esprit de Mortemart*; and still occasionally indulging in sallies of that ridicule which had formerly so keen an edge, that the courtiers avoided her windows at Versailles if she was standing in the balcony, for it was worse (so they said) than passing under a drawn sword. Like other fair penitents, Montespan apparently found it easier to mortify her body than to curb her tongue.

Although always in excellent health, the fear of death haunted her continually. She even paid women to sit up all night long in her bedroom, and kept candles burning at the windows while she slept. But when death came upon her at last, these terrors disappeared, and she died with the most perfect resignation. Shortly before she expired, Antin, her only legitimate son, arrived and asked to see his mother. With the heartlessness that seems to have been his second nature, he looked at her curiously and coldly for a few moments, wished her farewell, and scarcely waited till she breathed her last. He gave some directions about her funeral, and then galloped off to hunt with his friend Monseigneur. Her other children showed a more natural feeling, and mourned for her with some sincerity ; but (Saint Simon tells us) it was the poor people in her neighbourhood, on whom she had lavished half her fortune in her latter years, who showed the most genuine sorrow. Madame de Maintenon shed tears when she heard the news—tears of remorse, Saint Simon thinks ; but the king, for whom Montespan had sacrificed her happiness and honour, showed such indifference, that even the Duchess

of Burgundy expressed surprise that her death had not affected him more. "She has been dead to me," he replied, "ever since I bade her farewell years ago."

Meanwhile fortune seemed to smile upon Montespan's successful rival. In 1683 the queen, Maria Theresa, died—happy, perhaps, in being at last released from a life of sorrow and neglect. Forced always to ignore the infidelities of her husband, she had been grateful for the smallest kindness, and especially for the consideration always shown her by Madame de Maintenon. "I believe," said the poor woman, "that God raised her up to give me back the heart that Madame de Montespan had robbed me of. Never have I been so well treated by the king as from the day he first listened to her." Not only did she give the Marchioness a portrait of herself, set in diamonds; but on her deathbed she drew off her signet-ring and put it on Madame de Maintenon's hand, thus giving her, as it were, a right of succession. The Marchioness was then leaving the room, when the Duke of Rochefoucauld stopped her. "This is not the time to leave the king," said he; "you must stay, for his Majesty has need of you;" and she stayed accordingly.

That she was actually married to Louis before two years had elapsed there can be no reasonable doubt. Voltaire speaks of their marriage as a well-known fact; and Saint Simon says that Bontemps, the king's valet, among other marks of confidence, had been intrusted with the arrangement of the midnight Mass held in the winter of 1685, when the Archbishop of Paris solemnised their marriage before a few witnesses. Indeed the marriage would have been made public the next day had

not Louvois gone on his knees before Louis, and implored him not to disgrace himself in the eyes of Europe. But, whether acknowledged or not, Saint Simon does not conceal his own belief that, in celebrating this marriage at all, Louis had sealed his own doom.

“Thus it was that Providence prepared for the proudest of kings the profoundest, the most public, the most lasting, and the most unheard-of humiliation. . . . All that resulted—her triumph, his entire confidence in her, his rare dependence on her, her absolute power, the public and universal adoration paid her by Ministers, generals, the royal family—all, in a word, at her feet; everything good and lucky obtained through her, and everything refused unless she asked it; men, affairs of state, patronage, justice, favour, religion—everything without exception was in her hands, and the king and the state were her victims. What kind of woman she was, this incredible enchantress, and how she governed without a break, without an obstacle, without the slightest cloud, for more than thirty whole years—this is the incomparable spectacle which it concerns us to retrace, as it has long since concerned the whole of Europe.”

From this year, 1685, Madame de Maintenon was Queen of France in all but the name, and no queen in history was ever so exclusive or difficult of access. Her room at Versailles was a sanctuary to which none were admitted but the royal family, the Ministers of State, and a few intimate friends. Saint Simon himself probably never set foot across the threshold, and all he knew of its mistress was from some of the more privileged courtiers. In this room Madame de Maintenon remained the whole day when she was not at Saint Cyr, enshrined in what she called her “niche”—a three-cornered sofa of red damask; and here she received her

visitors, always seated herself, and never rising even to receive the Queen of England when she came over from Saint Germain to call on her. Occasionally, when Louis had no work with his Ministers, select dinners, sometimes followed by music or theatricals, took place in her apartment; but ordinarily the Ministers would bring their portfolios after dinner, and the king would work for hours while Madame de Maintenon sat at her embroidery listening to the discussion, but never volunteering her advice, knowing that, as a matter of fact, it would always be asked sooner or later. “*Que pense-t-en Votre Solidité?*” Louis would sometimes ask in a bantering manner. She would smile, says Saint Simon, pretend utter ignorance, talk of something else, but eventually led back the conversation to the point she wished to carry, or to the name of the person she wished to favour. But she could not always calculate on getting what she asked, and sometimes met with a rebuff that made her shed tears at the time, and kept her on thorns for days afterwards. Even the most favoured Minister could never make certain that his petition for some particular candidate would not meet with an abrupt refusal.

“ ‘You do not know how the land lies,’ said one of them to a friend. ‘Of twenty matters that we bring before the king, we are certain that he will pass nineteen as we wish; but we are equally certain that the twentieth will be decided against us. Which of these twenty will be decided against our wish and desire is what we can never tell, and very often it is just that matter in which we are most interested. The king reserves this stroke (*bisque*) to make us feel that he is master, and that it is he who reigns; and if by chance some-

thing is proposed about which he has a strong opinion, and which is sufficiently important for us to have an opinion about it as well, either on account of the thing itself or for the desire we have that it should succeed—it is very often then, in the rare event of its happening, that we are certain to get well scolded (*une sortie sûre*) ; but as a matter of fact, when the scolding is over, and the affair fallen through, the king—content with having shown us that we are powerless, and sorry to have annoyed us—becomes supple, and *then* comes the time when we can do all we want.’”

As an instance of Madame de Maintenon’s power, Saint Simon tells us that even her old servant Nanon, who had followed her fortunes from first to last, was always embraced by the princesses, and saluted with profound bows by the Ministers ; and when the Duchess de Lude wished for the post of Maid of Honour to the young Duchess of Burgundy, she sent her maid with twenty thousand crowns to Nanon, as the simplest way of gaining her object, and the same evening she was gazetted to the post. “So it is with Courts,” our author moralises ; “a Nanon sells the most important and brilliant offices of state ; and a rich lady—a Duchess of noble birth, without children or ties of any kind, but free and her own mistress—is foolish enough to sell herself into slavery at such a price.”

One memorable scene is recorded by Saint Simon as showing the profound respect with which Madame de Maintenon was always treated by the king in public. “He would have been a hundred times freer with the queen, and shown far less gallantry.” The occasion was the camp at Compiègne in 1698,—one of those magnificent displays of mimic warfare in which Louis delighted. Even Saint Simon’s usual command of lan-

guage almost fails him when he tries to describe the full splendour of the spectacle—"so startling, so entrancing, one must say so frightfully gorgeous"—the avenues of tents covered with tapestry and strewn with carpets, the ranges of kitchens and stables, the aqueducts fifty miles long which brought water for the immense host, the roads blocked with endless trains of pack-horses and sumpter-mules, the crowds of camp-followers, the musicians and pastry-cooks, the tailors and wig-makers, the banquets served on gold and silver plate, to supply which the neighbouring forests were ransacked for game and venison, and the seas for fish; and then the splendour of the review itself, when sixty thousand picked troops exercised, manœuvred, and went through all the details of a regular campaign under the eyes of Louis and his Court.

"But a spectacle of another sort, that I could paint forty years hence as well as to-day, so strongly did it impress me, was that which, from the summit of this rampart, the king presented to all his army and to the innumerable crowd of spectators of all kinds in the plain below.

"Madame de Maintenon sat alone, in her sedan-chair, facing the plain and the troops, between its three windows drawn up, her porters having retired to a distance. On the left pole in front sat the Duchess of Burgundy, and on the same side, standing in a semicircle, were Madame la Duchesse, the Princess of Conti, and all the ladies, and behind them again there were some men. At the right window was the king, standing, and a little in the rear a semicircle of the most distinguished men of the Court. The king was nearly always uncovered, and every now and then stooped to speak to Madame de Maintenon, and explain to her what she saw, and the reason of each movement. Each time that he did so she was obliging enough to open the

window four or five inches, but never half-way, for I took particular notice, and I admit that I was more attentive to this spectacle than to that of the troops. Sometimes she opened the glasses of her own accord to ask some question of him, but generally it was he who, without waiting for her, stooped down to explain to her what was passing; and sometimes, if she did not notice him, he tapped at the glass to make her open it. He never spoke save to her, except when he gave a few brief orders, or just answered the Duchess of Burgundy, who wanted to make him speak, and with whom Madame de Maintenon carried on a conversation by signs without opening the front window, through which the young princess screamed a few words at her now and then. I carefully watched the faces of the bystanders. All showed an embarrassed, timid, and stealthy surprise; every one behind the chair and in the semicircle watched this scene more than what was going on in the army. The king often put his hat on the top of the chair in order to get his head in to speak, and this continual exercise tired his loins very much. Monseigneur was on horseback in the plain with the young princes. It was about five o'clock in the afternoon, and the weather was as brilliant as could be desired.

“About the time when the town capitulated, Madame de Maintenon apparently asked permission to go away, for the king called out, ‘The chairmen of Madame!’ They came and took her away; in less than a quarter of an hour afterwards the king retired also, and nearly everybody else. Many spoke with their eyes and nudged one another as they went off, or whispered in their neighbour’s ear. Everybody was full of what had taken place on the ramparts between the king and Madame de Maintenon. Even the soldiers asked the meaning of that sedan-chair, and of the king every moment stooping to put his head inside of it. It became necessary gently to silence these questions on the part of the troops. What effect this sight had upon foreigners present, and what they said of it, may be imagined. All over

Europe it was as much talked of as the camp of Compiègne itself, with all its pomp and prodigious splendour."

Although her ambition was satisfied, it may be questioned if Madame de Maintenon knew any real happiness in these days of her power, except in the seclusion of Saint Cyr. Her sin — the "*péché de Lucifer*," of which she speaks — assuredly brought its own penalty. "Who knows," she writes, "whether I am not punished by the very excess of my prosperity? Who knows whether, rightly interpreted, the language of Providence to me is not this, 'You have desired honour and glory; you shall have them to satiety'?" Her letters are full of expressions of the weariness which preyed upon her continually. One day, looking at some fish that were restless and ill at ease in a marble tank—"They are like me," she said; "they long to get back to their mud:" and again, as she heard a young girl singing—"Tell me," she asked her ladies, "is not Jeannette's lot a happier one than mine?"

In one remarkable letter¹ she has described her long and weary day at Versailles, and tells how from seven in the morning till ten at night her room was filled by a succession of visitors going and coming; how all the jealousies and discontents of her friends were poured into her ears; how the women talked scandal and the men talked politics; how princes and Ministers pestered her alike; how she had to entertain Monseigneur, who never originated an idea himself, and to cheer and

¹ This interesting letter is given at length by M. Chéruel in his work on Saint Simon, p. 509. It will be found in Lavallée's edition of Madame de Maintenon's Letters, ii. 156.

console Louis, who would come back from his day's hunting melancholy and dispirited ; and how, when the evening came, she was often so fatigued herself that she could hold out no longer, and had to seek refuge in her bed ; but even then she could not sleep from sheer weariness of mind and body.

Louis himself never spared her, any more than he spared the other ladies of his Court.

"I have seen her," says Saint Simon, "travel from Marly or Fontainebleau so dangerously ill that one could not tell whether she would not die on the road. But, whatever her state might be, the king would come to her room at the usual hour, attended by his suite, without thought or care. It has often happened that he has thus come in while she was in the agonies of a feverish attack, and ordered all the windows to be opened, if he found them shut, to let in the air. If he required cards or music, her headache or any other infirmity was no hindrance. She must endure it all without complaint, and with a hundred candles flaring in her eyes."

Then she had other vexations. Her brother, D'Aubigné, was a constant source of annoyance to her. He was always in debt and difficulties, and many of her letters are addressed to him urging prudence and economy. He was only a captain in the Guards, but complained that he ought to have been a marshal at least : "However," as he said once to some one who wondered how he could afford to play for such high stakes, "he had taken out his baton in money." Then he married badly, and things got worse. At last Madame de Maintenon persuaded him to go into a kind of retreat for decayed gentlemen near Saint Sulpice ; but D'Aubigné found this life so intolerably dull that he made his

escape into Paris, where he relapsed into his old habits. Finally, Madame de Maintenon, in despair, put him under the charge of “the stupidest priest in Saint Sulpice,” who followed him everywhere like a shadow, and made his life a burden to him. Saint Simon says D’Aubigné was a good, honest fellow, very different from his sister, and that it was the best fun in the world to hear him talk of the king “his brother-in-law,” and of the “widow Scarron” of former days.

Saint Cyr was only a few miles from Versailles,—dangerously near, as some people thought, like a dovecot near a hawk’s nest,—and in its lecture-rooms and gardens Madame de Maintenon would pass whole days, when she could be spared from Court, playing that “*rôle* of Mentor and Minerva,” which was her second nature; directing, observing, advising, teaching classes, and surrounded by the young girls, whom she encouraged to talk and question her; telling them stories of her past life and of the world outside their walls, or writing tales and conversations to amuse them. Of this busy side of her life she never grew wearied. “Nothing,” she writes, “is dearer to me than my children at Saint Cyr. I love the whole place, even to the dust beneath their feet.”

By way of giving them ease and refinement of manner, some of the elder girls were taught to act scenes from “Cinna” and “Andromache;” but in the latter piece (there are four lovers in it) they seem to have overdone their parts, and Madame de Maintenon writes in consequence to Racine: “Our girls have just acted ‘Andromache,’ and have acted it so well that they shall never act it again, or any other of your pieces;” and she

requires him to write something moral, serious, and historical—"with no love in it." Racine obeyed, and wrote "Esther," with which Madame de Maintenon was charmed,—not so much by the beauty of the words as by the scarcely-veiled allegory which made her the chaste and modest Jewish maiden who triumphs over the imperious Vashti (Montespan) and the disgraced Aman (Louvois), and becomes the bride of the great and beneficent Ahasuerus (Louis). The piece was acted again and again, and on one occasion Madame de Sévigné was present, and says, "The harmony between the music; verses, hymns, and personages of the drama was so perfect as to leave nothing to be desired. All was simple, innocent, sublime, and touching; and the hymns were of a beauty not to be listened to without tears."

It was to Saint Cyr that Madame de Maintenon retired, "after seeing," as she said, "the king die like a saint and a hero;" and it was here that she found the rest and repose she had, by her own account, longed for all her life. She lived in the completest retirement—reading and writing, frequently attending Mass, receiving the visits of a few friends, and almost forgotten by the world. She was well provided for by the liberal pension allowed her by the Regent, "which her disinterestedness had made necessary;" and, Saint Simon adds, "no abbess, no daughter of France, was so absolute, so punctually obeyed, so feared, so respected, and at the same time so loved, as she was by all immured within Saint Cyr."

We only once hear of her retreat being disturbed, and that was on the occasion of the Czar's visit to Paris in 1717. When she heard he was coming to see her, Madame

de Maintenon went to bed at once, as the safest place of refuge ; but she was not safe even there. The Czar entered her room, and, with the rudeness of his nation, drew aside the curtains of her bed and told his interpreter to ask her what her sickness was. “A great age” (*une grande vieillse*) was the reply ; and then, after a prolonged stare, his Majesty withdrew without a word, and she was left in peace.¹ It is almost the last time that her name appears in history. She died at the age of eighty-three, listening to the hymns of her favourite pupils, and was buried in the chapel attached to the convent. “Your house shall never fail you,” she had once written to the Abbess, “so long as there shall be a king of France ;” and up till 1793 her prophecy held good. But in that year the storm of the Revolution broke upon Saint Cyr : the teachers and pupils were dispersed, the cloisters desecrated, and the body of the foundress was torn from its coffin. By the pious care of her relation, the Duke of Noailles, her remains were afterwards restored to their former resting-place, and a simple slab of black marble may still be seen, let into the wall of the chapel, with the modest inscription—

CY GÎT MADAME DE MAINTENON

1635 · 1719 · 1836

¹ This is the ordinary account ; but Saint Simon says, “The Czar said not a word to her nor she to him.”

CHAPTER VII.

SAINT SIMON'S LIFE AT COURT.

ENOUGH has been already said to show that Saint Simon would find himself in troubled waters at Court. In fact, if we except the two old Dukes of Beauvilliers and Chevreuse, there was scarcely a nobleman at Versailles whom he could call his friend. He could not dissociate their personal qualities from what he considered their degraded position. What good thing could be hoped or looked for from men whose highest ambition it was to hold the king's stirrup when he mounted his horse, or hand him the towel when he had washed his hands? What could be expected from peers of lower degree, when the grandest of grand seigneurs—the Duke of Rochefoucauld—regarded it as the glory of his life never to have slept for a single night away from Versailles for forty years? The great names of history had been tarnished in the persons of their degenerate descendants. Their very titles had lost their proud significance. “Those of Count and Marquis,” he says, “have been dragged in the dust by the number of these nobodies, without an acre of land, who have usurped them, and hence they have fallen away to nothing; so much so that even people of distinction, who are Marquis or Count, are absurd enough (if

they will allow me to say so) to be annoyed when one gives them their title in addressing them."

Besides losing their ancestral prestige, the nobility had also lost their political influence; indeed they regarded politics as beneath their notice, and only fit for the sons of tradesmen and lawyers like Colbert and Le Tellier. "They had to choose between the desk and the sword," says Saint Simon, "and they had chosen the latter. . . . They were given up to ignorance, to frivolity, to pleasure, to foolish extravagance,—of no use on earth except to get killed in battle, and to stagnate all the rest of their time in the most deadly idleness."¹ One day, as Saint Simon was declaiming in his usual fashion against the degradation of his own order, in the presence of his friends, the two old dukes—

"'They let me talk on,' he says, 'for some time. At last the Duke of Beauvilliers got very red, and asked me in a severe tone, 'What is it, then, you wish for yourself that would content you?'

"'I will tell you, sir,' I answered, warmly; 'I should like to be born of a good old family; to have a fine estate also, with fine privileges attached to it, without dreaming of being extremely rich. I should be ambitious of being raised to the first dignity of my own part of the country; I should like, besides, some important office at Court; to enjoy all that; and then—I should be content.'

"The two dukes listened to me, looked at one another, smiled, said nothing in reply, and a moment afterwards purposely changed the subject."

¹ In the same way De Tocqueville considers one of the proximate causes of the French Revolution to have been the "useless, idle, and restless lives passed by the *noblesse*," who had retained their feudal privileges without their political power.—(See his essay in the 'Westminster Review' of 1836, and *Ancien Régime*, p. 151.)

The sublime egotism of these aspirations, and the frankness with which he confides them to his friends—and to us—are highly characteristic of Saint Simon. This personal vein pervades almost every chapter. His own views, his own ideas, his own theories—how he lectured this friend, and how he denounced that enemy—what he thought of the Bull *Unigenitus*, what he wrote on the training of the Dauphin, what he said on almost every subject of the day,—all this, while it gives to his Memoirs an interest and individuality of their own, certainly goes far to justify Marmontel's criticism—that Saint Simon “saw nothing in the nation but the Nobility; nothing in the Nobility but the Dukes and Peers; and nothing in the Dukes and Peers but HIMSELF.”

His lawsuit against Luxemburg¹ was only the prelude to a series of attacks upon some of the proudest titles in the French peerage. Amongst others, the Lorraines had incurred his deadly enmity by what he calls their “*tracasseries*.” The Duke of Lorraine had married “Mademoiselle,” daughter of “Monsieur,” the king’s brother, and had assumed a ducal coronet, with the royal fleur-de-lys, and had even claimed the title of “Royal Highness” from the people in his duchy. Besides these acts of insolence, the ladies of the family had refused to carry round the alms-plate in the chapel—as if they were of the blood-royal. Then the other Court ladies began to think the duty undignified; and at last none of the duchesses, including Madame de Saint Simon, would undertake it. The king expressed his displeasure at this frivolous dispute, thinking, with some justice, that Saint Simon was the cause of it all.

¹ See p. 35.

“Since he had left the army,” he complained, “he had done nothing but study questions of precedence; and it would serve him right if he were to banish him from Court altogether.”

This thunder from Olympus alarmed Saint Simon, and he at once obtained an audience of the king, when he explained and apologised for himself. Had he had any idea that he was offending his Majesty, he “would have carried round the plate himself, like a village church-warden.” The disturbance, he declared, was entirely owing to the Lorraines — more especially to “M. le Grand,” Louis de Lorraine, then sixty years of age, who was a personal friend of the king’s, and, even by Saint Simon’s own showing, the greatest nobleman at the Court. To quarrel with him was almost like flying in the face of royalty itself.

He seems, however, for the time, to have made his peace with the king, for, not very long after the “Affair of the Alms-Rate,” he was, to his great surprise, nominated Ambassador to Rome—a high honour for a young duke of thirty. But such an appointment then, as now, involved considerable expense, and Saint Simon was in doubt as to whether he could afford to accept it. His friends, however, strongly advised his doing so—he might take it without being absolutely ruined, the Chancellor told him; and his wife gave him the same advice.

He takes this opportunity of telling us of the high compliment paid by the Ministers on this occasion to his wife’s good sense, and how they advised him to keep nothing secret from her in his embassy—“to have her at the end of the table when he wrote and read despatches, and to ask her opinion on all occasions.” He says that

he always did so, and never found any one's advice so wise, so judicious, and so useful.

But Saint Simon never went as ambassador to Rome after all. The appointment was cancelled a few days after it was announced—to his wife's (and possibly to his own) great relief; and he attributes this blow to his dignity to his enemies at Court, and, above all, “to the strange aversion of Madame de Maintenon.” His very virtues, he declares, had told against him in this matter. Louis was jealous of a young man reported to be not only “a boaster, a grumbler, and full of theories,” but besides, “to have talent, learning, capacity, and application,—in short, to have every quality necessary to a statesman” (*homme enfin très propre aux affaires*). Thus, while men far inferior to him intellectually, but more adroit courtiers, were daily receiving fresh honours and appointments,—pensions, and governorships, and abbeys, and preferments of every kind,—Saint Simon found himself left out in the cold, unnoticed and undistinguished. Nor did his position improve as time went on. Instead of making the attempt to swim with the stream, and conciliate his opponents, he seems to have continually made fresh enemies. Not content with attacking the Lorraines, and other peers, on questions of precedence, he embroiled himself with the “Meudon cabal”¹ (the Dauphin’s set); he made two bitter personal enemies in Antin and the Duke of Maine—the ablest and most popular men of the rising generation—and he gave great offence to Louis by betting five pistoles with some boastful courtier that the fortress of Lille would be taken by the enemy before it could be relieved by Vendôme. As

¹ See p. 147.

he confesses, it was a rash and foolish wager, that ought never to have been made ; and as the fact of the fortress surrendering, after a heroic defence, increased the king's prejudice against this young duke, who seemed to be as unpatriotic as he was free of speech, Saint Simon soon paid the penalty for his imprudence, and indeed began to find his position at Court so embarrassing, with enemies and calumniators on all sides of him, that he determined for a time to leave Versailles altogether, and, as he says, "to breathe a healthier and more peaceful air" at his country seat.

There he was joined by Chamillart, the disgraced Foreign Minister, who had been, like his friend, attacked by some of the Dauphin's clique at Meudon, and who had been too proud or too honest to stoop to conciliate them. Saint Simon tells us how serenely and cheerfully Chamillart bore his change of fortune, but notices that he would never be alone for a moment if he could help it—"like a man who fears himself, and seeks to fill the void he feels in his own heart."

After Chamillart had left, Saint Simon still stayed on at La Ferté ; indeed he had some idea of settling down there altogether, but his wife, with her usual good sense, pointed out the absurdity of his thus burying himself in the country, where he would soon get tired of his books and solitary walks. His friend Pontchartrain (the Chancellor) took the same view, and it ended in Saint Simon's returning to Versailles.

He was greatly struck, on his return, by the isolated position of his old friend and comrade, the Duke of Orleans. This prince, who had always been more or less out of favour at Court, had lately given mortal offence

to two powerful ladies, Madame de Maintenon and the Princess des Ursins, by styling them, in an after-dinner speech, “the She-Captain” and “She-Lieutenant” of France. The sting of this jest lay in its evident truth, and both these women determined to revenge themselves on the perpetrator of this “fatal *bon-mot*.” It was not difficult to injure Orleans’s reputation, for it was already sufficiently bad. He was said to have conspired against the Spanish Crown—to have intended to divorce (if not poison) his own wife, then marry the sister-in-law of the late King of Spain, and then imitate the unnatural conduct of William III. of England, by de-throning his near relative, the Duke of Anjou. A storm of indignation had broken out. Even Monseigneur had been roused from his usual apathy, and had demanded that Orleans should be impeached on a charge of conspiracy and high treason. This proposal was seriously debated in the Cabinet, and the Chancellor privately asked Saint Simon what would be the proper form of impeachment in such a case. Saint Simon, however, assured him that the high treason, if committed at all, was against Spain, not France, and that the accused must accordingly be tried by a Spanish, and not by a French, tribunal.

Saint Simon next resolved to rescue Orleans, if possible, from his degraded and isolated position at Court, and, as a first step, to break off his *liaison* with a Madlle. de Sèry (afterwards known as Madame d’Argenton)—the Phyllis, without whom he declared, in some very indifferent verses, life would be insupportable. To break off this connection was a difficult as well as a delicate task; and those sixty pages, in which

Saint Simon tells us how powerfully he worked upon the better feelings of the prince, contain some of the finest passages in his Memoirs. He placed before Orleans “the choice of Hercules” over again—but clothed in language that might have come from the lips of Bossuet or Bourdaloue. He enlarged on the great possibilities of the future, to a prince of the rank and position occupied by Orleans, “on the steps of the throne itself;” he placed on one hand the lustre and brilliancy of a life devoted to high and noble purposes, the honour of his country, the esteem of his peers, the confidence of his sovereign,—and on the other side he draws a hideous picture of nobles “whom their birth, their family, their establishment, and their dignity should naturally have carried to the distinctions due to their position, degraded by their debauchery, unknown at Court, abandoned to their own proper shame and misery, scorned even by the vilest company, objects of censure and contempt to king and people, reduced to such a state of degradation as to be not worth correction or reproof”—and then he names several characters who had been thus “buried in the slime.” It now rested with Orleans himself, his mentor concludes, “to choose once and for all his life one of these two states—so different—lying ready to his hands, since, after so many wasted years, another step on the downward road would seal the stone of the sepulchre where he would be immured alive, and whence no human aid could possibly draw him forth.” And then, with a reference to the “prodigious mischief which would be caused to the State by the loss of a prince of his rank, of his age, and of his talents,” Saint Simon brings his long harangue to a close.

Orleans was so profoundly moved, as well he might be, by this “terrible after-dinner scene,” that he sought an interview the same evening with Madame de Maintenon, who, to his intense surprise, told him precisely what Saint Simon had told him,—“even in the same phrases and same arrangement of sentences.” He was inclined to suspect that his friend was in collusion with “that woman,” as he called her; but after all, as Marshal Besons, who was present at the interview, observed, there was nothing so very strange in this coincidence, for truth must be always the same, whether it came from the lips of Saint Simon or of Madame de Maintenon.

Then Orleans had an audience of the king, but Louis had received the poor prince’s expressions of penitence with so cold and stern an air, that Orleans returned from the interview in a state of despair, which alarmed his two friends. “He threw himself on a sofa, and sometimes stupefied, sometimes cruelly agitated, only expressed his feelings by an appalling silence, or by a torrent of sighs, sobs, and tears, while we were ourselves agitated and excited by such a violent paroxysm, and restrained our joy, and did not dare to speak, and could with difficulty persuade ourselves that this connection had been so fortunately broken off.” A few days afterwards Madame d’Argenton left the Palais Royal, and we hear the last of her.

Saint Simon now thought it would be a good time to make his own peace if possible with Louis, and he accordingly requested a private audience in that precious half-hour between his Majesty’s toilet and morning Mass, when he made what we should now call “a personal

explanation." At first Louis listened with a haughty air of attention, "which gradually softened into a more open expression of kindness and satisfaction," as Saint Simon pleaded his cause with his usual fervid eloquence ; and the interview ended by the king, "with a fatherly air," giving him some good-humoured advice, not to talk so much, nor to be so keen on questions of rank, and so to avoid making personal enemies : then he dismissed him with a smiling and gracious bow.

From this time Saint Simon's position at Court seems to have improved. Previously he had not even had a room at Versailles that he could call his own. That which he occupied had been lent him by his father-in-law, De Lorges. But now a suite of six rooms was allotted to him in the new wing near the chapel. Each of these rooms had a sort of cabinet at the back ; and one of these cabinets was turned into what he calls his "workshop." Here were his books and papers : here in solitude and silence he could transcribe each evening the events of the day, and keep the journal on which his Memoirs were founded. Here, too, he could discuss future schemes of State policy with his friends Chevreuse or Beauvilliers without fear of interruption from unwelcome visitors ; or hold such private interviews as that he has described to us with the king's confessor.

But his active mind was never at rest. No sooner had he extricated Orleans from his embarrassment, than we find him busied in contriving a marriage between Orleans's daughter, "Mademoiselle," and the Duc de Berry—son of Monseigneur, and grandson of Louis XIV., —a most difficult task, as these two branches of the royal family were scarcely on speaking terms. Moreover, the

Meudon faction had other views for Monseigneur's son. But the difficulties only served to excite Saint Simon's energies, and he made use of his intimate knowledge of the different "cabals" to play one off against the other with consummate skill. He was fortunate enough to secure the goodwill of the ladies, the Jesuits, and above all of Madame de Maintenon, and the king's confessor, Père le Tellier, whose veto would have stopped the whole business. Next he had to overcome strong opposition on the part of Monseigneur and "the Meudon faction," who hated the very name of an alliance with the Orleans branch of the Bourbons, and who wished that Monseigneur's son should marry the young daughter of "Madame la Duchesse," the head of their own society. At the first hint of the marriage projected by Saint Simon, Monseigneur, mild as he was usually, exploded with anger. Furthermore, it was necessary that Orleans should get the king's formal consent to the match ; and Orleans was "as immovable as a log." It was with the greatest difficulty that he could be induced even to write a letter on the subject ; and in the end Saint Simon had to write it himself, and Orleans made a fair copy of it. But, even then, Orleans kept this precious letter in his pocket a whole week without daring to deliver it ; and it was only by actually pushing him by the shoulders into the royal presence that Saint Simon could induce him to present it. But the letter was given, and the king read it carefully through twice. In a few days he called Monseigneur, and told him, "with the air of a king and father," that the marriage must take place ; and Monseigneur "did not dare to gainsay the king, for the first time in his life." He stammered, hesitated, and at last gave way. Indeed,

after the first moments of disgust, he took the whole business easily enough ; and, when Orleans and his wife came to call on him, he embraced them warmly, made them dine with him, drank their healths repeatedly, and appeared to be in the highest state of delight and good-humour.

Antin was the first of the Meudon party who heard the news, but, far from betraying the least feeling of annoyance, he even went so far as to “applaud the idea with that delicate taste of flattery which he had so largely at his command, and which cost him so little even in the things which annoyed him most.” But he at once posted off a courier to Madame la Duchesse. The news fell upon her like a thunderbolt, and her rage and indignation were extreme. “I would have given a good deal,” says Saint Simon, maliciously, “to have been hidden behind the tapestry in those first strange moments.”

Saint Simon received nothing but thanks and congratulations on all sides, and for the time being the triumph was complete ; but unluckily, so far as any domestic happiness was concerned, or any real union between the Bourbon and Orleans branches, this marriage, so eagerly and so carefully planned, proved a miserable failure. The young Duke of Berry was himself perhaps the best of the Bourbons—“the gentlest, most amiable, and most compassionate of all men ;” gay and frank with the few people he knew well, but so ignorant of all subjects except hunting, that he never ventured to open his mouth before strangers, and so afraid of the king that he lost his head completely if his Majesty addressed him, and would stand “twirling his hat in his hand like a child,” without being able to articulate an answer.

From the first he was devotedly attached to his wife, and for a little time she seemed to return his affection ; but soon she showed her character in its true light. She despised her easy and gentle husband, ridiculed his piety, outraged and insulted him, and herself carried on intrigues that scandalised even the lax morality of her own time. “She was a model of all the vices,” says Saint Simon, “excepting avarice, and was the more dangerous as she had art and talent to help her out.” In pride she even surpassed her mother, the Duchess of Orleans, whom the duke always called “Madame Lucifer,” and “ who smiled with pleasure at the compliment.”

“It is an instance,” says Saint Simon, “of how in this world people work with their heads in a sack, and how human prudence and wisdom are sometimes confounded by successes which have been reasonably devised, and which turn out detestable. . . . We discovered, when too late, that we had introduced a Fury, whose only thought was how to ruin those who had settled her in life, to injure her benefactors, to make her husband and her brother-in-law [the Duke of Burgundy] quarrel, and to put herself in the power of her enemies, merely because they were also the enemies of her natural friends.”

An additional source of annoyance to Saint Simon was the appointment of his wife as Lady-in-Waiting to this demon in petticoats. It was an honour that they would both have gladly declined, but they had no choice in the matter. Not only did the Orleans family eagerly desire it—possibly in the hope that Madame de Saint Simon’s good example might influence this “model of all the vices”—but Madame de Maintenon and her ladies had also set their hearts on it, and the king him-

self approved highly of the selection. Orleans had suggested that Saint Simon might refuse, and Louis was rather disquieted by the thought: "Your friend is sometimes a little eccentric; but refuse, oh no!—not when he learns it is *my* desire."

A few days afterwards the king summoned Saint Simon to his cabinet, and after paying him many compliments, and speaking in the highest terms of his wife—"for no man in the world knew how to do this better when he chose, and above all when he was offering you some bitter pill that he wished you to swallow"—he intimated his royal wishes in the matter, and Saint Simon did not venture even to hint at disobedience.

"The king then smiled again more cheerfully, like a man who understands you well, and who is relieved at not having met with the resistance he had expected, and who is content with that sort of liberty which he has found, and which makes him better appreciate the sacrifice that he feels has been undergone, without having his own ears wounded by it. At the same time he turned his back to the wall, which he had been facing before, a little turned towards me, and in a grave and magisterial but elevated voice, said to the company: "Madame la Duchesse de Saint Simon is Lady-in-Waiting to the future Duchesse de Berry." At once there arose a chorus of approval at the choice, and of praises of the lady chosen; and the king, without speaking further, passed on to his cabinet at the back."

It may be noticed here, as in all his other audiences recorded by Saint Simon, how thoroughly Louis is master of the situation; how even this talkative and impetuous duke is overawed by the majesty of the speaker, and does not give the faintest hint of dissent or disapproval; how few and well chosen the royal

words are, and how, as they are spoken, a stillness fills the air ("a silence in which you might hear an ant walk," says Saint Simon in another passage), followed by the *brouhaha* of the courtiers, the hum of mingled applause and curiosity. And it is impossible not to be struck by the kingliness of Louis, so "bien royale," as Sainte Beuve says, even in his slightest actions; the curious thing being, that the very man who personally disliked the king so intensely, should throughout his pages bear unwilling, or perhaps unconscious, testimony to that commanding and majestic deportment which, more than any other of his kingly qualities, gained him the title of "Le Grand Monarque."

CHAPTER VIII.

JESUITS AND JANSENISTS.

WITH Madame de Maintenon began a new era in French history—the reign of the saints, or the “Cabals of the Devout,” as Saint Simon calls them. The same mania for direction that had led her to found Saint Cyr, induced her also to act the part of “a universal abbess—a mother of the Church.” It gratified her pride to be consulted by theologians and doctors of divinity; to correspond with cardinals and bishops; to have priests and abbés waiting in her antechamber. Nothing, again, pleased her more than to win some proselyte from another creed, or to reclaim some repentant prodigal of the Court; and Saint Simon tells us how easily she was imposed upon by one Courcillon, whom she nursed through an illness, and to whom she would talk and read good books for hours at a time, though when she left the room this impudent young libertine would take her off for the benefit of his friends, and send them into fits of laughter by his clever imitation. But then, adds Saint Simon, “Madame de Maintenon was always the queen of dupes.”

Her own room, with its crucifixes and books of devo-

tion and sacred pictures, was more like an oratory than a boudoir, and Versailles generally took a tone of gravity and sobriety that must have contrasted strangely with the dissipation of former days. Louis himself observed all the fasts and festivals of the Church, attended Mass, and received the Sacrament with the ardour of a new convert ; and the courtiers followed his Majesty to chapel, and watched him at his prayers, with the same regularity that they attended his *levée* or his promenade. “ Racine has surpassed himself,” wrote Madame de Sévigné ; “ he loves his God as he used to love his mistresses.”

As may be supposed, this outward devotion was often the merest pretence, and those who attended Mass the most regularly were in many instances the most dissolute courtiers. “ The profession of a hypocrite,” wrote Molière, “ had marvellous advantages ; ” and a more detestable form of hypocrisy cannot well be conceived than that impersonated in “ Tartuffe,” or in “ Onuphre,” one of the characters of La Bruyère. Saint Simon tells us story after story to show how false and hollow the fashionable religion was in reality : the two gay old ladies who relieved their consciences by making their servants fast ; Orleans reading a black-covered volume at Mass, with an appearance of great devotion, but which proved to be Rabelais instead of a breviary ; Madame de Maintenon’s bosom friend, the Princess of Harcourt, discovered playing cards when she ought to have been at Vespers ; Madame de Roncey, who communicated every week, “ but had the most evil tongue ” at Court ; M. d’O, “ who had such an air of sanctity and such austerity of manners that one was tempted to cut his cloak in pieces from behind ” (*i.e.*, make phylacteries of it). But

none of his stories is more characteristic of the time than the practical joke played by Brissac upon these zealous frequenters of the royal chapel.

“Brissac, Captain of the Guard, was an honest fellow, who could not endure what was false. He had seen with impatience all the seats in the chapel lined with ladies at evening service on Thursdays and Sundays during the winter, because they knew the king never missed attending himself ; but if they knew early enough that the king was not coming, not a soul was to be seen there. On the pretence of reading their breviaries, they all had little candlesticks in front of them, so as to let their faces be seen and recognised.

“One evening, when the king was expected to come to service, and the usual preliminary prayer had been read, and the Guards were at their posts, and the ladies all arranged in their places, Brissac comes in, just as the prayer is over, raises his baton, and gives his orders in a loud voice : ‘Gentlemen of the Royal Guard, retire and withdraw to your quarters ; his Majesty is not coming this evening.’

“As soon as the Guards had obeyed, there was whispering among the ladies in a low tone ; the little candles were extinguished ; and off they all went except Madame de Dangeau and a few others, who remained. Brissac had placed officers at some of the doorways leading from the chapel, who ordered the Guards to take up their posts again, as soon as the ladies were far enough off for there to be no doubt of their departure.

“Presently the king arrived, and, greatly astonished at seeing no ladies in the galleries, he inquired how it happened there was no one there. As they were leaving the chapel, Brissac told him what he had done, and expatiated on the piety of the ladies of the Court. The king laughed heartily at the trick, and so did all those with him. The story soon got about, and all the ladies would have liked to have strangled Brissac.”

Again, if the following anecdote is true, this mock devotion was often accompanied by an ignorance worthy of the dark ages of Christianity. Count Grammont was one of the greatest wits and finest gentlemen of his day.

"Being seriously ill at the age of eighty-four, a year before his death, his wife spoke to him of God. The utter forgetfulness in which he had lived all his life threw him into a strange sort of surprise at the mysteries revealed to him. At last, turning to her—'But now, Countess,' he asked, 'are you telling me the very truth ?' Then, hearing her read the Lord's Prayer,—'Countess,' said he again to her, 'this prayer is beautiful. Who composed it?' He had not the least particle of any religion."

The Jesuits, by all accounts, seem to have been responsible for much of this inconsistency between profession and practice. With them religion took its most attractive form, and could be associated with all that made life pleasant—with wine and love, with gay dresses and sumptuous living. Falsehood, murder, and adultery were no longer the deadly sins that had been supposed; pardon could be obtained, and indulgences might be bought, if recourse was had to a Jesuit confessor. With a Jesuit at hand, the most hardened sinner had no occasion to despair—"for," says Saint Simon, "they deceive him, from motives of worldly policy, up to the brink of the tomb, and conduct him to it in profound peace along a path strewn with flowers."

"Masters of the Court, through their position as confessors to nearly all the kings and catholic sovereigns; masters of almost every state through their instruction of youth, their

talents, and their diplomacy ; necessary to Rome, in order to insinuate her pretensions over the temporal power of sovereigns, and her supremacy over all things spiritual, so as to annihilate the episcopate and general councils ; formidable from their power and their wealth, entirely devoted to the purposes of their Order ; carrying authority by their multifarious knowledge, and by every art of insinuation ; winning men's affections by an easiness and a tact (*tour*) which had never yet been met with at the confessional, and protected by Rome as being especially devoted to the Pope by a fourth vow, peculiar to their society, and more peculiarly fitted than any other class to extend his supreme dominion ; in other respects, recommending themselves by the austerity of a life entirely consecrated to study and the defence of the Church against heretics, as well as by the sanctity of their early Fathers ; lastly, terrible by a policy the most refined and the most profound, which postponed every other earthly consideration to that of power, and sustained by an internal government in which absolute authority, subordination of rank, secrecy, expediency, uniformity in views, and multiplicity of means—were the inspiring principles."

It was not long, says Saint Simon, before Madame de Maintenon's religious zeal began to take a more active form. She persuaded the king that the conversion of the Protestants would put the coping-stone on the glories of his reign,—that he might thus vindicate his title of Most Christian Majesty, and prove a second Theodosius or Constantine. After various enactments increasing in severity, the famous Edict of Nantes, by which Henry IV. had insured safety and toleration to his Protestant subjects, was formally revoked in 1693 ; and then began that persecution "which was not to cost a drop of blood," and which was made infamous by what were known in history as "the Dragonnades of Louvois."

"This frightful plot," says Saint Simon, "depopulated a quarter of the kingdom, ruined its commerce, enfeebled it in every part, gave it up for years to the open and avowed pillage of the soldiery, authorised torments and punishments in which many innocent persons of both sexes died in reality by thousands, ruined a host of people, tore asunder a world of families, armed relations against relations, to seize their goods and leave them to die of hunger, made our manufactures pass to strangers, and caused their commonwealths to flourish and overflow at the expense of ours."¹

Père la Chaise had been the king's confessor for more than thirty years, and Saint Simon speaks warmly of his gentle and liberal character. All his influence—so far as it could be exercised—seems to have been for good. He befriended Fénelon in his exile; he did his best to shelter the fugitives of Port Royal; and he scandalised his orthodox friends by keeping on his table a copy of a Jansenist commentary on the Gospels, explaining that he liked good wherever he found it. Feeling the infirmities of age creeping on him (for he was now more than eighty), the old man had several times petitioned to be allowed to give up his duties; but Louis would not hear of it, and to the last Père la Chaise continued to absolve his royal penitent, though his own memory had failed, and his mind wandered. Shortly before his

¹ These barbarities do not seem to have offended the public opinion of the day, for we find Madame de Sévigné writing in the pleasantest way possible from her country-house in Brittany: "Oh no, we are not so dull here. Hanging is our amusement just now. They have just taken twenty or thirty of these fellows, and are going to throw them off." And again, she says her son-in-law has "just made a fatiguing journey to pursue and punish these wretched Huguenots, who came forth from their holes, and vanished like ghosts to avoid extermination."

death, he asked the king as a special favour to choose his successor from among the Jesuits,—hinting that unless he did so, “a dangerous blow might be struck, and it would not be for the first time.” Louis, says Saint Simon, “wanted to live,” and therefore took good care to choose his new confessor from the Order of Jesus. He selected Père Tellier—the very opposite in mind, manner, and body, of the good, easy Père la Chaise—a kind of arch-Jesuit, regarded with terror even by his own brethren, and with something like horror by Saint Simon, although from the first Tellier made him friendly advances, and, as we shall see, asked his advice and opinion as to the celebrated “Constitution.”

“The first time that Père Tellier saw the king in his cabinet after having been presented to him, there were only present Bloin (the valet) and Fagon (the doctor) in a corner. Fagon, bent double, and leaning on his staff, watched the interview closely, as well as the countenance of this new personage, with his bowings and scrapings and his answers. The king asked him if he was a relation of Messieurs Le Tellier (the Chancellor and the Bishop). The good Father bowed himself to the dust. ‘*I, sire,*’ answered he, ‘a relative of Messieurs Le Tellier ! *I* am very far from being that ; I am a poor peasant from Lower Normandy, where my father was a farmer.’ Fagon, who had watched him closely, so as not to lose a word, twisted himself up, and made an effort to look at Bloin. ‘Sir,’ said he, pointing to the Jesuit, ‘what a cursed scoundrel !’ and shrugging his shoulders, leant again upon his staff.”

Saint Simon says he was not far wrong; indeed Père Tellier, as Saint Simon describes him, is almost the ideal Jesuit of fiction. Harsh, exacting, laborious—

"With a heart and brain of iron, and an enemy of all amusement and dissipation;" false and unscrupulous, with "his real character hid under a thousand folds, and owning no god but the interests of the Order. . . . He would have been a terrible fellow to have met in a dark lane, with his cloudy, false, and sinister countenance, and his eyes burning with an evil radiance, and squinting in both directions."

To his ascendancy over the mind of Louis, Saint Simon attributes the persecution of the Jansenists, whose doctrines seem to have been a milder form of Calvinism. Jansen's 'Augustinus' (which contained the famous "Five Propositions" condemned by the Pope) insisted much on the efficacy and necessity of divine grace, vouchsafed only to a few, and obtained only by continual prayer. Generally speaking, it was a protest and reaction against the insincerity of the religion of the day, and the dangerous morality of the Jesuits. Jansen and his followers denounced, both in precept and in practice, the whole of that gorgeous ritual by which the Church of Rome seeks to make her creed attractive and imposing. The music and the incense, the paintings and the images, the embroidery and the vestments, were all proscribed. When the Jansenist worshipped, the service was to be in the simplest and severest style; the Gospel was to be read in the vulgar tongue, the Psalms were to be chanted, and hymns might be sung, but there was to be no "ritual," no High Mass, and no frequent celebration of the Sacrament. It was by prayer, by solitude, by fasting, by suffering, by humiliation, by all that could mortify both soul and body, that man could alone hope to draw near his Maker.

So much of what the Jansenists professed and taught seems clear, but notwithstanding, half the world in those days appears never to have agreed or understood what was exactly implied in Jansenism.¹ According to Saint Simon, the Jesuits “invented this heresy, which had neither founders nor followers,” to serve their own purpose; and then induced Louis, who had always associated Port Royal with the Fronde, to believe Jansenism to be synonymous with treason and impiety, and to regard a Jansenist as the avowed enemy of social order. That this was Louis’s actual impression may be gathered from the following story, which Saint Simon has told us twice over:—

“ Among those whom the Duke of Orleans wished to be of his suite in his journey [to Spain in 1708], he named Fontpertuis. At this name the king at once put on a severe air.

“ ‘How is this, nephew? Fontpertuis, the son of that Jansenist—that silly woman who ran everywhere after M. Arnauld! I could not think of allowing a man of that sort to go with you.’

“ ‘By my faith, Sire,’ answered the Duke, ‘I don’t know what the mother has done! but as for the son, *he* has taken good care not to be a Jansenist, I will answer for that, for he does not even believe in God.’

“ ‘Is it possible?’ replied the king, recovering his good-humour.

“ ‘Nothing more certain, Sire, I can assure you,’ replied the Duke.

¹ Even now, many orthodox Catholics suppose that the Jansenists were Socinians, Calvinists, bastard Lutherans; and one writer couples Jansen with Mahomet, and boldly pronounces a Jansenist to be “a worshipper of Satan”—*Histoire universelle de l’Eglise catholique*, xiii. 295.

"‘Since that is so,’ said the king, ‘there is no harm in him. You may take him with you.’

“This scene (for one can call it by no other name) took place in the morning, and the Duke of Orleans told it me after dinner the same day, almost dying with laughter, word for word, just as I have written it down. After we had both of us laughed heartily at it, we admired the profound learning of a devout and religious king.”

The story went the round of the Court, and every one laughed at it,—although, says Saint Simon, some of the more thoughtful courtiers were more inclined to weep than laugh over such ignorance, coupled with such bigotry, in the person of “his Most Christian Majesty.”

Rightly or wrongly, Port Royal had been always regarded as the headquarters of Jansenism, and the Jesuits had determined on its destruction. The story of these “solitary and illustrious saints” (to use Saint Simon’s words)—of Arnauld and Le Maistre, of Saint Cyran and La Mère Angélique, of Pascal and the famous “Letters,” in which he appealed to the world against the dogmatists of his day—of the closing of the monastery and the dispersion of the recluses,—all this has been fully told in another volume of this series.¹

Of Port Royal itself, in 1701, nothing was left but a ruined chapel and graveyard, and a convent where twenty-two aged nuns still lingered on, whom Louis himself would willingly have left alone to die there in peace. His surgeon, Maréchal, had been deeply impressed by the patience and piety of these holy women, and his report had strongly influenced his master. But the terrible Père Tellier had resolved on their disper-

¹ “Pascal,” by Principal Tulloch.

sion. Feeling their case was hopeless with the Jesuits against them, the unfortunate nuns appealed to Rome, but the Pope only responded by a bull which ordered that “this nest of heresy should be uprooted from its foundations,” and the Cardinal de Noailles had no alternative but to enforce the papal mandate.

In the autumn of 1709 Port Royal was surrounded by a body of archers under Argenson, lieutenant of the police; the nuns were summoned to the chapter-house; the royal commission was read to them, and then they were hurried into carriages, and each of them carried off to a different convent. The parting scene between these aged sisters, many of them sick and infirm—their tears, their misery, their agonising farewells—moved even the rough archers of the Guard to pity.

But even this dispersion of the nuns did not satisfy the Jesuits. There still remained the graveyard—“the necropolis of Jansenism”—where the ashes of three thousand recluses of Port Royal reposed in what might have been thought consecrated ground. It was ordered that the bodies should be exhumed, and the graveyard ploughed up, and a gang of workmen were sent down for the purpose. For two months they continued their odious task, and their horrible profanity excited the deepest resentment among the relatives and descendants of those whose graves were thus shamefully violated. After the bodies had been removed, the plough was passed over the burial-ground, and the church and cloisters were destroyed so completely that not one stone was left upon another.

Innocent XII. had died in 1700—“a great and holy Pope,” says Saint Simon; “a true pastor and common father of the Church, such as one rarely sees in Saint

Peter's chair." He was succeeded by Clement XI., as weak as he was amiable, who gave way to the pressure brought to bear on him by the Jesuits. After various refusals and delays, he at length published the celebrated bull *Unigenitus*, which condemned a hundred and one propositions contained in Père Quesnil's commentary on the Gospels, which, on its first appearance, some thirty years previously, had been quoted and admired by orthodox Catholics.¹ The "Constitution," as the bull was called, was received both at Rome and in France with indignation and alarm "by all," says Saint Simon, "excepting those who were enslaved to the Jesuits—that is to say, by honest people in every class of life." The cardinals protested against it; many of the bishops refused to recognise it; the doctors of the Sorbonne denounced its terms; and though the Parliament ratified it, as being "by order of the king," it was with sullen murmurs of disapproval. Every one wondered how the Pope could have been induced to pass such a sweeping sentence of condemnation on recognised authorities, and this is the explanation that Saint Simon had from Amelot, who had been sent as a special envoy to Rome on this occasion :—

"He told me that the Pope had taken a liking to him, and often spoke to him in confidence, groaning over the straits in which he found himself, and over his powerlessness to do as he pleased. In one of these conversations the Pope opened his heart on his regret at having ever allowed himself to publish the "Constitution;" that it was the king's letters that had extracted it from him, and those of Père Tellier;

¹ See p. 104.

. . . and that if he had expected a hundredth part of the opposition he had met with, he would never have given his consent to the measure.

"Thereupon, Amelot frankly asked him why, if this was so, and he wanted to publish a bull at all, he had not contented himself with censuring a few of the propositions in Père Quesnel's book, instead of making a clean sweep of a hundred and one propositions. Then the Pope cried out and began to weep, and, seizing him by the arm, said thus in Italian : 'Ah, Monsieur Amelot, Monsieur Amelot ! what would you have had me do ? I fought inch by inch to get rid of some of them ; but Père Tellier had told the king that there was in this book more than a hundred propositions deserving censure ; he did not wish to pass for a liar, and his party held me down by the throat until they made me condemn more than a hundred, to show that he had spoken the truth, and *I have only put one more in the bull !* See, see, Monsieur Amelot ! how could I have acted otherwise ?'"

Whether this pitiable confession of weakness on the part of Clement XI. is true or not, there is no doubt as to the pressure put upon him by the Jesuits, nor as to the persecution employed to enforce submission to the "Constitution." All who refused to agree to its clauses were "*tenus pour suspects*," and, as before, hundreds of innocent persons were imprisoned or sent into exile. No class felt safe from attack when such men as Rollin, Fontenelle, and La Chapelle were arrested by the police. Poor students of theology, inoffensive merchants, sisters of charity, were among the first victims. Even at Versailles the sense of insecurity was so general, that Madame de Saint Simon warned her husband not to talk too loudly about the "Constitution," or he would inevitably find himself in the Bastille.

The Jesuits were triumphant for the time, and Père

Tellier found means to reward such of his satellites as had been most active in procuring this condemnation of Jansenism, and thereby advancing “the greater glory of God,” as well as of their Order. A pension was given to Lerouge; Rohan and Polignac each received a rich preferment, and Bissy got a cardinal’s hat. It was even proposed to establish the Inquisition in France; and one Jesuit (Lallemand) enlarged on its merits to the Marshal d’Estrées. “The Marshal,” says Saint Simon, “let him talk on a little while, and then, the fire mounting to his face, he cut him short by telling him that, if it was not out of respect for the house where they were (the Abbey of Saint Germain du Pré), he would have thrown him out of the window.” Fifteen years afterwards, in 1732, another Jesuit (P. du Halde) made a similar proposal to Saint Simon. “I took him up,” he says, “in such a rough fashion, that all his life afterwards he never dared to speak of it again to me.”

The Protestants did not escape a second persecution, any more than the Jansenists. In 1712 a new edict was passed against them. Those who would not conform to the Catholic faith were no longer allowed to practise their simple worship in caves and desert places as heretofore, but were pursued and apprehended by the police and soldiers. The men were sent to the galleys; the women were imprisoned; and their pastors, if they were found officiating, were hung in chains by the roadside. The tale of their wrongs and sufferings has been so often and so pathetically told, that there is no need for dwelling upon it here. It is the blackest spot in the history of the time, and Saint Simon’s indignant denunciation of the authors and instigators of this barbarous

policy is only a faint echo of the deep and passionate resentment that it roused both in Paris and the provinces. One has only to turn to the caricatures and pasquinades of the day to find abundant proofs that in this respect he has not exaggerated the intensity of popular feeling. Whether he is right in ascribing this policy, as he does, to the sinister influence of Madame de Maintenon, is another question. After all, he says, she was herself “the dupe of her own hypocrisy,” and a mere puppet in the hands of the Jesuits.

“She believed herself the prophetess who should save the people of God from error, from revolt, and from impiety. It was in this belief, with which Bissy¹ inspired her, that she excited the king to all the horrors, all the violences, all the acts of tyranny then practised upon men’s consciences, upon their fortunes and their persons, and which filled the prisons and dungeons. Bissy suggested and obtained all he wished.

“The barbarous measures taken with the Huguenots after the revocation of the Edict of Nantes were on a large scale the model of those now taken with all who would not agree to the ‘Constitution.’ Hence arose the innumerable artifices used to intimidate and gain over the bishops, the schools, and the lower clergy; hence came that vast and ceaseless storm of *lettres de cachet*, that struggle with the Parliament, that total denial of public and private justice, that open inquisition and persecution even reaching to simple laymen—a whole people exiled or shut up in prisons; and lastly, the inexhaustible devils’ broth (*pot au noir*); to besmear all whom the Jesuits would, . . . and that countless throng of persons of every age and every sex exposed to the same trials of faith as those endured by the Christians under the Arian emperors, and, above all, under Julian the Apostate.”

¹ Bissy succeeded Bossuet as Bishop of Meaux.

It is curious, after reading this tirade, to find Saint Simon in another passage complacently saying that he had always been on good terms with the Jesuits, and was looked upon by them as a friend and supporter of their interests. But the fact is, that he was himself oppressed and almost terrified by the illimitable power of the Jesuits in that age ; and, so far as it was possible in him to play the courtier, he certainly paid court to what he felt to be the strongest body in the kingdom. Yet, while he was ostensibly Père Tellier's excellent friend,—while he even opposed the proposition of his colleague Noailles to expel the Jesuits “ bag and baggage ” from France—he has not scrupled to describe, in the strongest language at his command, the deadly tendencies of their doctrines ; and at one of his secret interviews with Père Tellier, he plainly denounced some of the clauses of the bull *Unigenitus* as revolutionary, and dangerous to the very existence of a monarchy.

“ This short statement of mine exasperated the Jesuit, because it hit the right nail on the head, in spite of all his cavilling and equivocation. All the time he avoided saying anything personally offensive, but he fumed with rage, and . . . in his furious passion, being no longer master of himself, many things escaped him which I feel sure he would afterwards have paid very dearly to have left in silence. He told me so much of the extremities and the violence that would be used to make the ‘ Constitution ’ accepted—things so enormous, so atrocious, so frightful, and all with such furious passion—that I fell into a veritable syncope. I saw him face to face between two candles, there being only the breadth of the table between us—(I have described elsewhere his horrible countenance)—and all at once, stupefied both in sight and hearing, I comprehended, while he was speak-

ing, all that was implied in a Jesuit,—a man who, by his personal annihilation, and bound by the vows of his Order, could hope for nothing for his family or for himself—not even an apple or a glass of water more than his brethren,—who was so old as to be even then drawing near the time when he must give an account to God, and yet with deliberate purpose, and with studied artifice, was about to throw State and Church into the most terrific conflagration, and begin the most frightful persecution for questions that mattered not a jot to him, nor touched in any degree the honour of the school of Molina.

“ His deep and dark designs, and the violence that he showed, so bewildered and confounded me, that I suddenly interrupted him and said, ‘ My father, how old are you ? ’ The extreme surprise (for I was looking at him with all my eyes) that I saw painted on his face recalled me to my senses, and his answer completely restored me to myself. ‘ Eh ! why do you ask me that ? ’ said he, smiling. The effort that I made to avoid this fearful dilemma, of which I felt all the terrible importance, furnished me with a way of escape. ‘ It is because,’ said I, ‘ I have never looked at you so long as I have now, face to face and between these two candles, and you have such a fine healthy countenance, with all your labours, that I am perfectly surprised at it.’

“ He swallowed the answer—or at least made such a good pretence of doing so, that he said nothing of it at the time or since, and never ceased to speak to me as often as he had done before, and with the same openness, although I sought his company less than ever. He told me that he was seventy-four years of age ; that, as a matter of fact, he was in excellent health, and had accustomed himself to toil and hardship all his life. And then he took up the conversation again at the point where I had interrupted him.”

Saint Simon's own religious views (although he is not always consistent in the matter) are pretty much what we might expect from his shrewd yet earnest character.

He tells us frankly that he was himself “*ni docte ni docteur;*” that he had neither the time nor inclination to trouble himself about vexed questions of theology; that he had put himself in the hands of La Trappe, his spiritual adviser; and that La Trappe had warned him that Jansenism was a deadly heresy,—that there was neither charity, nor peace, nor truth in its tenets, and that it was dangerous alike to Church and State.

But if he was not a Jansenist, still less was he a Jesuit or an Ultramontane. He was warmly attached to the Gallican Church, and thought it had done good service in defending its liberties against the “aggressions and usurpations of the Court of Rome.” He recognised in the Pope “the chief of the Church, the successor of Saint Peter, the first bishop, but very far from being infallible, *in whatever sense one takes the words.*” In fact, his view of the papal supremacy is that of a moderate Catholic but not of an Ultramontane; and it is clear that anything like bigotry or intolerance, especially in the form of persecution, was abhorrent to his whole nature.

He passed a week or more every Easter at the monastery of La Trappe, only a few miles from his own country-house. The Abbot had been a distinguished soldier in the Fronde, but had retired from the world (it was said from disappointed love), and had for some thirty years led a life of penance and seclusion that seemed to have reached the limits of asceticism. Saint Simon always speaks of him with the profoundest veneration, and his affection was evidently returned. “He loved me as a father,” he says, “and I loved him as a son.”

So attached was he to the Abbot of La Trappe, and

so anxious to have some memorial of him, that he got Rigault to paint his portrait from memory, and the likeness was pronounced admirable. The fact of the picture having been taken at all was to have been kept a profound secret, but Rigault could not resist the temptation of making money by painting copies of it, and Saint Simon had to confess the trick he had played upon his confessor. La Trappe was much vexed, though he forgave the culprit. "I hate treason, but I love the traitor," was his way of condoning the offence. When he died, Saint Simon's grief was intense. "These Memoirs," he says, "are too profane to recall anything here of a life so sublimely holy, and of a death so grand and so precious in the sight of God. . . . All Europe felt his loss acutely; the Church wept for him; and even the world did him justice."

Next to La Trappe, Saint Simon had more sympathy perhaps with Fénelon than with any other prelate of the day, although he has discovered a strain of worldliness in Fénelon's character which his other biographers have passed over or ignored. His piety, he says, was "of that insinuating kind which is all things to all men;" his ambition had led him "to knock at all doors," and to pass from the Jesuits over to the Jansenists; but being "too subtle" (*trop fin*) for the latter, he had halted half-way with the Sulpicians, and made himself a reputation for his "penetrating genius" and courtly manners. Then Bossuet had taken him up; Beauvilliers was fascinated by him; he was appointed tutor to the young Duke of Burgundy, and all would have gone well with him at Court had he not, in an evil hour for himself, made Madame Guyon's acquaintance. Fénelon, whose

imagination was easily touched, was charmed with this young prophetess. “Their spirituality amalgamated,” says Saint Simon. He introduced her at Versailles, and Madame de Maintenon herself was among the distinguished converts attracted by this new phase of mysticism. Delightful little dinner-parties took place, when the guests interchanged spiritual confidences, and all “with a secrecy and mystery that gave additional flavour to this precious manna.” Madame Guyon even made her way into Saint Cyr, and the young girls there (as may be supposed) eagerly welcomed anything that relieved the monotony of their lives; indeed, they seem to have occasionally dreamed dreams and seen visions when they ought to have been engaged in their studies or household work.

Unfortunately both for Fénelon and Madame Guyon, Godet, the Bishop of Chartres—a stern divine, who had little sympathy with enthusiasm in any shape—discovered the dangerous tendencies of these new doctrines; and Bossuet, whom he consulted, took the same view. Madame de Maintenon was startled and indignant to find that “she had been led to the verge of a precipice,” and at once repudiated her friends. Madame Guyon was banished from Saint Cyr, and soon afterwards sent to the Bastille.

Fénelon, who to the last regarded this enthusiast as a persecuted saint, wished apparently to justify both her and himself, if it was possible, and wrote a book on the history of mysticism, called ‘Maxims of the Saints.’ This book, according to Saint Simon, was quite unintelligible “except to the Masters of Israel;” and those theologians who could understand it agreed that it was

“pure and refined Quietism, disguised under a barbarous language.” Its publication only increased the prejudice against Fénelon at Court; and Bossuet soon afterwards wrote two volumes in reply—“clear, short, concise, and supported by countless references from Holy Scripture, the Fathers, and the Councils;” and we are told that it was “received and devoured with avidity.”

Fénelon’s book was condemned by a commission of bishops. He was banished from Court to his diocese; Louis with his own hand crossed his name off the list of the royal household, and all who knew the king knew that, while he lived, the sentence was irrevocable. Almost immediately afterwards his book was placed by the Pope on the *Index Expurgatorius*; and whoever was found reading it, or even having it in his possession, was threatened with excommunication. The news of this last blow reached Fénelon just as he was mounting the pulpit in his church at Cambray. He at once laid aside his prepared sermon, and preached extempore on the duty of submission to the powers that be. He had still influential supporters among the Jesuits, and his friends hoped that such prompt obedience might have made his peace both with the king and the Pope. But this was not to be.

“Confined within his diocese, this prelate grew old there under the useless burden of his hopes, and saw the years glide by with a sameness (*égalité*) that could not but make him despair. Always hateful to the king, to whom no one dared mention his name even on indifferent subjects—more hateful still to Madame de Maintenon because she had ruined him—more exposed than any other to that terrible cabal which ruled over Monseigneur—he had no resource except

in the unchangeable affection of his pupil [the Duke of Burgundy], himself a victim of this cabal. . . . Then in the twinkling of an eye the pupil becomes the Dauphin, and in another moment, as one will see, he is raised to a kind of viceroyalty (*avant-règne*). What a change of fortune for a man of Fénelon's ambitious character!"

Saint Simon dwells at some length, and in more than one passage, upon Fénelon's peaceful and laborious life in his diocese, his charity to the poor, his visits to the hospitals, his grand hospitality, his kindness to the clergy, his urbanity and courtly manners; but he hints that, though occupied by his pastoral duties, and though delighting in his books and his flowers—the best companions of solitude—he still cast a longing eye to Versailles, to his young "Telemachus," and to the little band of friends, such as Beauvilliers and Chevreuse, who had never forgotten him during the twelve years of his exile. They still corresponded with him incessantly, and made him the confidant of their hopes and schemes for the future. They received his advice "as though his words were the oracles of God." They never ceased, as they assured him, "to talk of him, to regret him, to long for his return, to cling closer and closer to his memory, as the Jews clung to Jerusalem of old, and to sigh and hope always for his coming again, as that unhappy race still waits for and sighs after the Messiah."

How sadly their hopes were dissipated by the sudden death of the young Dauphin will be told in another chapter. Fénelon and his pupil only lived to meet once again—when the latter was on his way to join the army in Flanders in 1708, and his route lay through Cambray. The prince threw himself upon Fénelon's neck, and if

words were wanting, says Saint Simon, “the fire from his looks, darting into the eyes of the archbishop, supplied all that the king had forbidden him to say, and was an eloquence that carried away the spectators.” But this was the last and only interview between “Mentor” and “Telemachus.”

Fénelon survived the Dauphin some four years, and, “even after so many losses and trials, this prelate was still a man of hopes.” Orleans had declared that, if he became Regent, his first step would be to recall him from banishment. But it was too late: Fénelon’s health, never strong, had been broken by incessant labour, by grief, and by disappointment. In 1715 he lost his life-long friend, the Duke of Beavilliers, and this last blow struck him to the heart. A few months later he was himself carried to his last resting-place, dying as he had lived, “a model ever-present that none could attain to; in all things a true prelate; in all things also a grand seigneur, and in all things still more—the author of ‘Telemachus.’” Such is his epitaph, as Saint Simon has written it for us; or, as we might put it now, the Christian bishop, the perfect gentleman, and the accomplished scholar. Taking him all in all, we may search ecclesiastical history far and wide before we discover his superior, or even his equal.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SPANISH SUCCESSION.

SAINT SIMON's warmest admirers must admit that his account of the great war that convulsed Europe in the last decade of Louis XIV.'s reign is partial and unsatisfactory, and it is fortunate, on every ground, that we have not to depend upon his history of the campaigns that followed the accession of Philip V. to the throne of Spain. As it happens, this period is singularly rich in contemporary memoirs. We have the despatches of Marlborough on one side, and of Vendôme and Villars on the other; we have the letters of such masters of the art of war as Berwick and Prince Eugene; and we have the independent opinion of diplomatists like Torey and De Noailles. When collated with such evidence, Saint Simon is found to be as often wrong as right. His prejudices and personal dislikes are shown in his account of almost every battle; and while he does full justice to the talents of Marlborough, and even pays his tribute to William III., the sworn enemy of his country, he cannot find a good word to say for the gallant French soldiers who were fighting against long odds, dying of hunger in their camps, and perishing by thousands on the fields of Blenheim and Malplaquet.

A civilian is rarely a competent critic of the art of war, and Saint Simon, in spite of his four campaigns, was essentially a politician, and not a soldier. He was only present himself at one battle, and of that battle (Neerwinden) he has given us an amateur's account. He could paint the details that came under his own eye, but failed utterly to grasp the general plan of action. Like a painter who makes his sketch from a particular point of view, he brings some one scene or episode into strong relief, but ignores all that does not actually meet his eye. Again, writing, as he wrote, from his cabinet at Versailles, what could he possibly know of the real circumstances of half of what he tells us? He was not in the confidence of any of the Ministers excepting Chamillart, who soon resigned his office; he rarely saw any of the despatches; he was at deadly feud with most of the generals; there were no bulletins, no "special correspondents," and private letters were few and far between. What he heard was principally the gossip of the back-stairs or second-hand reports from second-rate authorities; and we may be sure that he eagerly caught at anything that would glorify his young hero, the Duke of Burgundy, or cast discredit on Villars, or Villeroy, or Vendôme.

As is well known, the grand question of succession, over which so much blood was subsequently spilt, was whether Charles II.'s enormous possessions, "on which the sun never set"—Spain, half the Netherlands, Milan, Sicily, Naples, Mexico, Cuba, and the African colonies—were to go to a French or an Austrian prince, to enrich the house of Bourbon or the house of Hapsburg. More than one secret treaty had been drawn up between

the parties chiefly interested in Charles's death, which divided the Spanish possessions between France and Austria,—Louis, of course, getting the lion's share in the division. Unfortunately, Charles heard of the last treaty concluded at the Hague between Louis and William III., and, exasperated at the thought of his kingdom being thus dismembered in his own lifetime, he drew up a fresh will, by which he left the whole of his vast possessions to the Duke of Anjou, the grandson of Louis XIV.

The excitement in Madrid was intense when, shortly afterwards, Charles died, and it was known that he had made a new will,—for public opinion in Madrid was divided between the Bourbons and the house of Hapsburg. The Council of State assembled at the palace, and the antechambers were thronged by nobles, Spanish dignitaries, and by foreign ambassadors, each eager to hear the terms of the will, and to inform their Court. Among the rest stood Blécourt the French ambassador, and Harrach the Austrian envoy, the latter being posted close to the door, with an eager and triumphant air.

“At length the door opened and closed again. The Duc d'Abrantes, who was a man with plenty of wit and a dangerous kind of humour, wished to have the pleasure of announcing the successor to the throne, as soon as he had seen the council agreed. He found himself surrounded the moment he showed himself outside. He cast his eye round him on all sides, still gravely keeping silence. Blécourt advanced. D'Abrantes looked at him very intently, and then turning his head the other way, seemed as though he were seeking for what he had almost in front of him,—an action which surprised Blécourt, and made him interpret it as of evil augury for France. Then suddenly making as

though he had only just perceived the Count d'Harrach for the first time, D'Abbrantes put on an air of joy, threw himself on his neck, and said to him in Spanish in a loud tone: ‘Sir, it is with the greatest pleasure’—and making a pause in order to embrace him better, he went on—‘Yes, sir, it is with extreme joy that for the whole of my life’—and then redoubling his embrace, to give himself an excuse for stopping once more, he finished with—‘and with the greatest satisfaction, that I separate myself from you, and take my leave of the most august house of Austria.’ And then he made his way through the crowd, every one running after him to know the name of the real heir. The astonishment and indignation of D'Harrach closed his mouth altogether, but showed themselves through his face.”

It was not likely that Philip V.’s accession would be tamely acquiesced in by the members of the Grand Alliance, and the emperor declared war at once against France; but public opinion was divided in England, and for the present that country made no sign. But, in 1701, James II. died at St Germain, and, whether out of generosity or bravado, or to gratify his hatred against William III., Louis publicly recognised the heir of the Stuarts as the King of England. “It was a stupidity,” says Saint Simon, “of which a child would not have been guilty.” By this folly he turned the English nation into a personal enemy, and England threw herself heart and soul into the war which followed, supplying, in proportion to her size, more men and money than any other of the allied powers.

Soon after this, William, who had been long in declining health, met with the accident which gave the last blow to his shattered constitution. He died—“but his spirit still continued to animate the Grand Alliance,

and his bosom friend Heinsius perpetuated it, and inspired with it all the chiefs of the Republic, their allies and generals, in such a fashion, that it was scarcely apparent that William was no more." France had against her the two greatest generals of the age—Eugene of Savoy, and Marlborough himself, who, says Voltaire, "was more of a king than William, as great a statesman, and a far greater general."

Meanwhile, calamities seemed to thicken around France. The campaigns that followed 1702 were a succession of blunders and disasters, culminating in the crushing defeat at Blenheim, or Hochstedt, as the French prefer to call it, where Tallard allowed his army to be cut in half, and where 11,000 men, who had been cooped up within the walls of the village, laid down their arms without striking a blow. Out of the army of 60,000 men that had paraded on the morning of Blenheim, scarcely 5000 answered the muster-roll when Marsin joined Villeroy a few days after the battle.

The news reached Versailles when it was ablaze with illuminations in honour of the birth of a young prince; but the details only transpired by degrees. That there had been a great defeat was well known, but the extent of the calamity could not even be guessed at. Neither despatches nor private letters threw any light on the national disaster, for the simple reason that no one dared to tell the truth. At last, an officer who had been taken prisoner was dismissed on parole by Marlborough to bring the news to Marly, "and," says Saint Simon, "one can imagine what was the general consternation, when each noble family (without speaking of others)

had its dead, its wounded, and its prisoners. We trembled in the midst of Alsace."

Next year Marlborough defeated Villeroy at Ramillies, where the battle was decided in half an hour; the French lost six thousand men, and all their guns and baggage, while the whole of Flanders lay open to the victorious army. Here again Saint Simon attributes the defeat entirely to the deplorable blunders of Villeroy, who had posted his raw recruits in the centre, had isolated his left wing behind a marsh, and had actually placed the baggage-waggons between his front line and the reserves.

Vendôme gained some successes in Spain, but these were soon neutralised by the disastrous battle of Turin, which, says Saint Simon, "cost us all Italy, owing to the ambition of La Feuillade, the incapacity of Marsin, the avarice, the trickery, the disobedience of the captains opposed to the Duke of Orleans."

In 1708 Vendôme again took the field in Flanders, but, by a fatal policy, the Duke of Burgundy was associated with him in the command; and this young prince, with all his amiable qualities, had no pretension to any military talent. Even by Saint Simon's account, he seems to have divided his time between hearing Mass, playing tennis, and dawdling over mechanical experiments. "You will win the kingdom of heaven, Monseigneur," said Gamaches, one of his suite; "but as for the kingdom of earth, Eugene and Marlborough take more trouble about getting it than you do." The enemy was not slow to profit by the division of counsel in the French camp, and their forces were concentrated upon Oudenarde, where a disastrous battle was followed by

an even more disastrous retreat. Saint Hilaire was present at the battle, and tells us how stubbornly the French Guardsmen held their ground—how Vendôme himself seized a pike and charged at the head of his grenadiers—and how the household brigade fought like lions to retrieve the day—while fifty battalions under the Duke of Burgundy were watching the battle at a prudent distance. Saint Simon tells us nothing of all this, but says, that when a retreat was proposed at the council of war held after the battle, Vendôme, “pushed as he was to extremities, with rage on his face, and fury in his heart,” taunted the young prince with his cowardice,—an enormous insult, says Saint Simon; but it must be confessed that our sympathies are rather with the soldier who fought than with the pious and pedantic Duke of Burgundy, who looked on; and Vendôme might have pleaded in excuse of his rough speech, like Hotspur, that it angered him

“To be so pestered with a popinjay.”

It is clear that the feeling at Court ran strongly in Vendôme’s favour, for Saint Simon complains that on his return he was almost worshipped “as the hero and tutelary genius of France,” while for Burgundy there was nothing but cold looks and a disdainful silence, even from his own family. However, if we may trust our chronicler, Vendôme lost favour as rapidly as he gained it, and, thanks to the persevering hostility of the young Duchess of Burgundy, was banished from Versailles and Marly, and at last from Meudon,—“a triumph equally great in the sight of gods and men.”

Not long afterwards, Lille—the strongest fortress in

France—succumbed to Eugene after a heroic resistance, in which we are told the garrison had been reduced to “eat eight hundred horses,” and had repelled assault after assault.

“The agitation at Court was extreme, even to indecency. The expectation of a decisive battle engrossed us all. The happy junction of the two armies [under Vendôme and Berwick] was regarded as a certain presage of success. Each delay increased our impatience ; every one was restless and uneasy ; the king even demanded news from the courtiers, and could not imagine what kept the couriers back. The princes and the suite of all the noblemen and people of the Court were with the army. Every one at Versailles felt the danger of their friends and kinsmen ; and the oldest established families saw their fortunes in suspense. For forty hours prayers were offered everywhere ; the Duchess of Burgundy passed the night in the chapel, while people believed her in bed, and distracted her ladies by her vigils ; and, following her example, all the wives who had husbands in the army never stirred from the churches. Games, and even conversation, had ceased. Fear was painted on every countenance and in every speech in a shameful manner. If a horse passed by a little quickly, every one rushed to the windows without knowing why. Chamillart’s rooms were crowded with lackeys, even to the street door, for every one wished to be informed the moment a courier arrived ; and this agonising suspense lasted a month, until a battle put an end to our uncertainty. Paris, being further from the source of news, was still more troubled, and the provinces to an even greater extent. The king had written to the bishops to offer up public prayers in terms proportioned to the danger.”

It would perhaps be going too far to say that Saint Simon rejoiced in the misfortunes of France; but it is certain that he passes very slightly over the French victories,

such as Denain, Almanza, and Villa Viciosa, while he devotes chapter after chapter to the long story of French defeats and disasters. An officer who resigns his commission at the beginning of a war, as in his case, is scarcely in a position to malign and disparage the efforts of men who are giving their life-blood for their country ; and it is impossible not to feel something like contempt, when we find Saint Simon dangling about the ante-rooms at Versailles, and fulfilling his self-imposed mission of spy and reporter, while battles were being daily lost and won, and while every prince and noble of military age were taking their share of active service on the frontiers. As he tells us himself, there was scarcely a family about the Court that had not its tale of dead and wounded ; yet their intense anxiety for news from the seat of war seems to him “ indecent ; ” he can only show his patriotic interest in the campaigns by betting on the capture of the most important French fortress ; and, sitting at home at his ease, he can find no word of generous sympathy for the poor, half-starved, half-clothed soldiers, dragged from their homes, “ to die like flies,” as Louville said, by famine and sickness, as well as by the sword.

The continued disasters in the war, added to the terribly severe winter of 1709, induced Louis to make overtures of peace, and Torey was sent on a secret mission to the Hague. The French king only stipulated that Philip should be allowed to keep Naples and Sicily, otherwise he declared himself ready to surrender anything and everything. “ But,” says St Simon, “ his enemies derided his misery, and negotiated only to mock him.” Heinsius — the Dutch banker — inspired the allied

general with something of the persevering enmity which he had himself inherited from William of Orange ; and the demands made by the Allies were so exorbitant that Louis had no alternative but to reject them. “I am a Frenchman as well as a king,” he declared, “and what tarnishes the glory of France touches me more closely than my own interests ;” and then for the first time in his life he made a personal appeal to his own subjects to rise and repel the invaders. “There was but one cry,” says Saint Simon, “of indignation and vengeance ; nothing but offers to give all their goods to carry on the war, and to undergo extremities, such as they had undergone before, to mark their zeal.” To set an example, Louis sent his gold plate to be melted down, and most of his courtiers imitated their master ; and those who could not give money gave themselves.¹ Peasants, mechanics, poor farmers, and broken-down gentlemen, in spite of the misery and distress in the provinces, flocked in numbers to join the ranks, and Louis would have again taken the field in person, had it not been “for the evil genius which held him fast in those domestic fetters, whose weight he never felt.” Prayers were offered up in every church throughout the kingdom for the success of the French army, and early in the following spring Villars was sent to try his fortune in Flanders at the head of 110,000 men.

But that year only saw fresh reverses. Tournay, a fortress nearly as strong as Lille, was taken, and the loss was quickly followed by the defeat at Malplaquet,—

¹ Saint Simon showed characteristic prudence.—“When I saw that I was almost the only person at Court still eating off silver, I sent a thousand pistoles’ worth of it to the Mint, and locked up the rest.”

the most obstinate and most murderous battle fought during the war. The victors lost more men than the vanquished, and bivouacked on the field among 25,000 dead. "The Court had grown so accustomed to defeats," says Saint Simon, "that a battle lost, as Malplaquet was, seemed half a victory." Yet he will allow Villars no credit for his own heroic conduct, or for the good order of the retreat. We hear little of the terrible privations endured by the survivors of Malplaquet. "There was no meat or bread; the soldiers ate roots and herbs"—is all that Saint Simon says of the famine that was desolating the camp. Boufflers, we are told, deserved half the glory of the campaign, such as it was; but Boufflers was neglected and disgraced, and died of a broken heart, while Villars received honours and rewards for victories which had been won by his lieutenants. "The name which his invincible good-luck has acquired for him for all future time has often disgusted me with history," says Saint Simon. He was all "*fanfaronnade*," with "the magnificence of a Gascon, and the greediness of a harpy."

But if Saint Simon is unjust to Villars, he is still more unjust to Vendôme, against whom his hatred breaks out whenever he mentions his name. He ascribes half the misfortunes in the war to his indolence and incapacity, and hints that even his victories were won by his troops, almost in spite of himself. But then Vendôme crossed the arms of France with the bar-sinister; he was closely allied to Monseigneur's faction; he was himself given to wine and riotous living; his home at Anet was Meudon on a grosser scale, or rather an Abbey of Thelema, where all licence was permitted; "his Bohemians,"

as Saint Simon calls his friends, did nothing but drink and gamble, and rivalled their patron in ribaldry and profanity ; and as for his brother, the Grand Prior, we are told that he was “a coward, a liar, a sharper, a scoundrel, and a robber ;” that he reverenced nothing on earth except the “divine bottle,” and had been carried to bed drunk every night for forty years.

Vendôme’s life, no doubt, was scandalous enough, and he had a cynical disdain for the proprieties, and even for the decencies, of society ; but of his military talents there can be no question. Even Eugene acknowledged him as a worthy antagonist. He had repaired many of the disasters both in Flanders and Italy ; he would have saved both Lille and Turin, had he not been hampered by a divided command, as well as by impracticable orders from the Court ; and when, in 1711, he was summoned to take the command in Spain, his name acted like a charm—Spanish enthusiasm revived, soldiers flocked to his standard, and in a few months he recovered most of the lost ground in the Peninsula. It may be added to this that he was idolised by his own troops, and that his white plume was to be seen, like that of his grandfather, Henry of Navarre, in the thickest of the fighting.

Saint Simon tells us, with an ill-concealed air of triumph, how miserably Vendôme died, soon after his successes in Spain. Always a great epicure, he had retired, with a few attendants, to a little hamlet on the Spanish coast, and there he gorged himself with fish to such an extent that he actually died, like one of our English kings, “from a surfeit of lampreys.” Every one abandoned him in his last moments, and his valets plundered him and decamped, taking with them even the mattress and

bed-clothes, and leaving their unfortunate master, in spite of his piteous entreaties, to die alone on the bare boards. As he had deserved so well of Spain, Philip ordered his body to be taken to the Escorial—the palace and mausoleum of the Spanish kings—where it was walled up in one of the outer rooms. When Saint Simon visited the spot some years afterwards, he saw the last resting-place of his old enemy. “I gently asked the monk in charge,” he says, “when the body was to be carried into the inner room; but they avoided satisfying my curiosity: indeed they showed some irritation, and did not scruple to let me understand that they did not think of moving it at all, and that, since they had done so much for him as to wall him up there, he might stay there altogether.”

Louis had again made overtures of peace in 1710, and sent two ambassadors to a conference at Gertruydenburg—one of them being Polignac, the most skilful diplomatist of the day. As before, the French king was ready to make all reasonable concessions, but the Dutch demands were even more insolent than in the previous year. Louis must dethrone his grandson, they insisted, by force of arms, if persuasion failed. But this humiliation was more than Louis could brook. “Since one must make war,” he said, “it shall be against my enemies, not against my children;” and his ambassadors left Holland, appealing “to God and to Europe against the sufferings and bloodshed that must follow from the obstinacy of Heinsius and the ambition of Marlborough.”

Saint Simon moralises, after his own fashion, over the ignominy of these abortive negotiations, and on the deplorable calamities of the war that was desolating his country:—

“ Led in this manner up to the very verge of the precipice, with a horrible deliberation that gave time to appreciate all its depth, that all-powerful hand which has placed a few grains of sand as a boundary to the most furious storms of the sea, arrested all at once the final destruction of this presumptuous and haughty monarch, after having made him taste, in long bitter draughts, all his feebleness, his misery, and his nothingness. It was some grains of sand of another kind—but still grains of sand in their insignificance—that brought to pass this master-work of Providence. A woman’s quarrel about some trifles in the Court of Queen Anne and the intrigue that arose out of it, followed by a vague and unformed desire for the success of her own blood, detached England from the Grand Alliance.”

The result of this quarrel between Queen Anne and her favourite was the disgrace of Marlborough and the return of the Tories to office, who at once reversed the aggressive policy of the Whigs and “ held out a hand to France.” In 1712, an unknown abbé suddenly presented himself before Torcy, charged with a verbal message from Bolingbroke. “ Are you willing to make peace ? I bring you the means of opening negotiations.” It was, said Torcy, as if he had asked a dying man if he would like to recover his health. The preliminaries were soon settled, and in 1713 peace was actually concluded at Utrecht. This treaty, says Saint Simon, cost Spain half her kingdom. Philip retained the Spanish peninsula ; but Naples, Milan, and Flanders were severed from his empire. France gave up all her border fortresses ; and England gained Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. The following year a separate treaty was concluded with the emperor at Rastadt ; and thus, at an infinite cost of men and money, and after nearly thirty years of incessant war, France found herself at last at peace with the nations round her.

CHAPTER X.

THE PROVINCES.

FOR the *grands seigneurs*, as we have seen, life in these days flowed on pleasantly and gracefully enough ; but there is another side to this brilliant picture—"the reverse of the medal," as Saint Simon puts it. At the Court all was luxury and extravagance, and this while five armies were often in the field at once, and while Louis was squandering millions on his palace and *fêtes*. It cannot but be asked how this enormous drain on the wealth of the country was sustained, and how was the exchequer able to support the burden of war and peace ? It was this question that had baffled every Minister of Finance since the time of Colbert,—for he alone seems to have realised the simplest axiom of political economy, ignored by those who succeeded him in office, that the only way of enriching the exchequer was by developing to their utmost the productive resources of the country. It was with this view that Colbert had encouraged manufactures, stimulated commerce, and done his utmost to give confidence to French merchants, and stability to the public credit of French bankers. And in this way he had solved the great

problem of finance,—he had increased the revenue without increasing taxation.

But his successors had neither his genius nor his courage. They went back to all the pernicious expedients of Mazarin to raise money for the war. Every office and dignity in the state, from a marquisate to a captaincy, had its price, and was sold to the highest bidder. And when these were exhausted, new offices and new dignities were created and put up for auction. “Sire,” said the Minister of the day to Louis, “when your Majesty creates a new office, God always creates a fool to buy it.” Then they issued a large amount of paper money, and in consequence the currency was depreciated and prices were enhanced. Then they taxed every possible commodity—corn, and linen, and hemp, and silk; they placed custom-houses at every cross-road, and employed fifty thousand men incessantly in collecting these taxes from the wretched peasants. So heavy, indeed, were the taxes upon fluids of all kinds (*aides*), that while curiosities could be brought across the seas from Japan, and sold for only four times their value in Paris, a bottle of wine from the French provinces cost twenty times its value when it reached the Halles. It took three months and a half for the unfortunate wine-seller to pass his casks through the countless custom-houses that lined the highroads between Paris and Marseilles. In fact, both farmers and vine-growers found that it no longer repaid them to cultivate the soil. And thus the corn-fields of Languedoc, the vineyards of Anjou, the orchards of Normandy, were left untilled; and the figs and olives in Provence hung rotting on the trees. France, from one end to the other,

looked like a country that had been wasted by war and pestilence. The peasants were seen shivering in rags and stripped of all that they possessed, huddled together upon straw or roaming through the fields, and flying from the presence of the tax-gatherer. After reading the terrible chapters in which Saint Simon has described their misery, it is easy to appreciate the irony of La Bruyère's picture of the same period.

"One sees certain savage animals, male and female, scattered over the country, of a livid hue, scorched and blackened by the sun, bound down to the soil which they constantly ransack and turn over with invincible obstinacy. These creatures have a sort of articulate voice, and when they raise themselves on their feet, they show a human face, and, in fact, they are—men. At night they hide themselves in their huts, where they live on black bread, water, and roots. They spare other men the trouble of sowing, and toiling, and reaping for a livelihood, and it is only reasonable that they should not want the bread which they have sown."

But these poor creatures could not even get this bread. Wheat was heavily taxed, and was not even allowed to pass from one province to another; the system of "monopolies" still further raised the price of corn, and while the bakers and Government agents were making fortunes, hundreds of the wretched peasants in the provinces were dying of hunger. This distress culminated in the winter of 1709, which was ushered in by a frost of such unusual severity that Saint Simon tells us not only did the Seine become a block of solid ice, but even the sea was frozen on the coasts, and carried loaded waggons on its surface. Half the olive-trees and vines in France were killed by the intense frost; the cattle

perished for want of food ; and the peasantry died in hundreds of cold, disease, and famine.

“At the same time the taxes—increased, multiplied, and exacted with the extremest severity—completed the desolation of France. Everything increased in price beyond belief, while nothing remained to buy with, even at the cheapest rate.

“People did not cease wondering what could have become of all the money in the kingdom. No one could pay any longer, because no one got paid himself. The country people, owing to excessive taxation and bankrupt estates, had themselves become insolvent. Though all trade was taxed, it no longer yielded any profit ; while public credit and confidence had completely disappeared. Thus the king had no resource except the terror and the custom of his boundless power, though even this, all illimitable as it was, itself failed for want of victims to seize and persecute. He no longer even paid his troops,—though, unless he did so, it is impossible to conceive what became of the countless millions that poured into his treasury.

“Such was the fearful state to which all France was reduced, when our ambassadors were sent into Holland [to negotiate a peace]. This picture is accurate, faithful, and not the least overdrawn. It was necessary to give it in its true colours, to explain the dire extremity to which we were reduced, the enormity of the concessions which the king allowed himself to make to obtain peace, and the visible miracle of Him who puts bounds upon the sea, and who calls things which are not to be as things which are,—by which He delivered France from the hands of Europe, ready and resolved to destroy her.”

After reading these terrible chapters, in which Saint Simon describes the France of his day and which even now thrill the reader with indignation, it is easy to realise how all this misery and oppression, repeated and

intensified through three successive reigns, produced at last the Revolution of 1789 ; and the only wonder is that the people should have suffered so patiently and endured so long. But, even in Saint Simon's time, we have warnings of the coming storm ; we are told of risings among the peasantry which had to be suppressed by strong bodies of troops ; of serious bread riots in Paris ; of murmurs and execrations heard even under the windows of Versailles ; of insulting placards affixed to the statues of the king ; and of treasonable letters, some of which found their way to Louis himself, hinting that there were still Ravaillacs left in the world, and that a Brutus might yet be found to avenge the wrongs of a long-suffering country.

Some years before this, Vauban, perhaps the purest patriot as well as the most skilful engineer in France, had been profoundly touched by what he had seen of the state of the provinces as he went on official journeys from one fortress to another. The last twenty years of his life had been devoted to a personal inquiry into the trade, productions, and revenues of the country, and he had summed up his information in a volume which reviewed the existing system of taxation, exposed its abuses and enormities, and proposed to abolish the multifarious customs and duties, as well as the host of officials employed in collecting them. In their place Vauban would have had one grand tax—the “Royal Tithe”—to be levied partly upon land and partly upon trade ; and thus some relief, he thought, would be given to the hard-working tillers of the soil,—a class “so despised, and yet so useful, which has suffered so deeply, and is suffering still.”

But Vauban's scheme, like other sweeping measures of reform, clashed with the "vested interests" of the day. The whole army of collectors—from the controller-general down to the humblest clerk—saw at once that if it were carried into effect, the hope of their gains was gone, and they one and all joined in a strenuous opposition.

"This book," says Saint Simon, "had one great fault. Though it would, as a matter of fact, have given to the king more than he got by the modes of taxation in use up to that time ; though it would have saved the people from ruin and distress, and would have enriched them by allowing them to enjoy, with a very slight exception, all that did not actually enter the king's treasury ;—it would have ruined a host of capitalists, of agents, and *employés* of every sort ; it would have forced *them* to seek a livelihood at their own expense, and no longer at that of the public, and would have sapped the foundations of those immense fortunes which we have seen spring up in so short a time. This was what checked the scheme of Vauban."

Chamillart, then Minister of Finance, gave way to the pressure put upon him by the privileged classes, and Louis himself was led to believe that Vauban's scheme was that of a meddlesome republican, whose views were at once mischievous and treasonable. Indeed, one sentence in the book was pointed out to him as intended to strike at the first principles of absolute monarchy. "It was unjust," Vauban had written, "that all the body should suffer to put one of its members at ease." Accordingly, when the Marshal presented his work to the king, he was received ungraciously, and was told in plain language that his views were dangerous and revolutionary ; while the copies of his book were at once impounded by the

police. This ingratitude from a monarch whom he had served only too well was a deathblow to the old man; then in his seventy-fourth year. He withdrew from Court in cruel disappointment, and a few weeks afterwards died at his country-house of a broken heart.

In one sense Vauban's scheme died with him; but it died only to be revived in a new form not many years afterwards. Desmarests had succeeded Chamillart as Minister of Finance, and had exhausted every apparent means of raising money,—doubling and trebling the capitation tax, and increasing the taxes on all commodities till they amounted to four times their value. At last, driven to his wits' end and (as Saint Simon puts it) "not knowing of what wood to make a crutch to lean upon," Desmarests proposed that the "Royal Tithe" should be levied upon all classes in addition to their other burdens, although when Vauban had proposed it by way of superseding every other tax, it had been rejected as something too monstrous to be put in force. A Commission was appointed to see if it was practicable, and they reported in favour of levying it. But, even then, Louis shrank back with something like horror from the idea of imposing this last burden on his subjects. However, to relieve his conscience he consulted Père Tellier, and that Jesuit, with the easy logic of his Order, assured him that the most learned doctors of the Sorbonne had unanimously agreed that the property of the people was really the property of the king, and that, if he confiscated it, he was, after all, only taking back what was properly his own.

Accordingly, this tax, "designed," says Saint Simon, "by a bureau of cannibals, was signed, sealed, and regis-

tered amid stifled sobs, and proclaimed amid most subdued but most piteous lamentations." No person in the state was exempt from it, and the odious inquisition into private incomes and property, necessary for its enforcement, made it still more detestable. Even the king's own family spoke of it with abhorrence, and contrasted such injustice with the paternal government of ancient times; they denounced it "with a holy anger that recalled the memory of Saint Louis, of Louis XII. the father of his people, and of Louis the Just." So heavy had the weight of taxation now become, that the province of Languedoc offered to give up its entire revenues to the Crown, on condition of being allowed to keep a tenth part clear of taxes. But this proposal was rejected as an insult.

The only practical result of this heavy imposition seems to have been that Louis was able to add five men to each company of his infantry; that the Carnival began earlier; and that, as if to drown care, the winter balls and *fêtes* at Marly were on a more splendid scale than ever. Yet all the while, adds our chronicler, "Paris did not remain the less sad, nor the provinces the less desolated."

CHAPTER XI.

MEUDON AND MONSEIGNEUR.

IT is scarcely possible to follow Saint Simon's Memoirs by summers and winters in the way Thucydides wrote his history, for the simple reason that our writer never troubled himself about chronological sequence, but tells his story as the fancy leads him, without any regard to method or arrangement—perhaps even thinking that such mechanical details belonged rather to “the men of the quill,” whom he holds in such profound contempt, than to a *grand seigneur* like himself. It would be an endless task to keep step with him along his own track, as he wanders from subject to subject, and from one digression to another, breaking off from the stirring incidents of the war to describe some scandal at the Court, or to give the pedigree of some gentleman-in-waiting. All that can be done, if we attempt to follow him at all, is to select the more striking episodes and characters, and to disentangle the scattered threads of individual histories.

Leaving, therefore, for a while, the war and the provinces, and going back to Saint Simon's personal life at Court, it may be remembered that he often speaks with

mingled fear and aversion of the “Meudon cabal.” Meudon was Monseigneur’s country-house, and “Monseigneur” was the name by which the Dauphin was always known. He resembled his father, says a writer, “as Vitellius might have resembled Julius Cæsar.” He had the fine features of the Bourbons, but they were without expression and bloated by excess; he had the grand deportment, but it was disfigured by his corpulence; he had the majestic carriage, but halted in his walk. All the grand social qualities of Louis were vulgarised in his son. The king would play for large sums with a magnificent indifference as to whether he won or lost, and often paid the gambling debts of his courtiers. Monseigneur also played for high stakes, but always with a greedy anxiety to win what he could. The king had thrown a halo of romance over his amours, but Monseigneur’s mistress was one Choin—“a great, fat, flat-nosed brunette”—who came by the back-stairs, and had the air and appearance of a servant-maid. “As to character,” says Saint Simon, “Monseigneur had none.”

“He was without vice or virtue, without talent or any sort of knowledge, and radically incapable of acquiring any. Extremely lazy, without imagination or originality, without refinement, without taste, without discernment; born to be the prey of a weariness which he imparted to others, and to be a stone set rolling haphazard by another’s impulsion; obstinate and excessively mean in everything; easily prejudiced beyond all conception, and ready to believe everything he saw; given over to the most mischievous hands, and incapable of either extricating himself or perceiving his position; drowned in his fat and his mental blindness (*ténèbres*); so that, without wishing to do wrong, he would have made a pernicious king.”

His ignorance, even for a Bourbon, was something surprising. He knew nothing whatever of any subject except cookery, could talk of nothing except his last boar-hunt, and read nothing except the list of births and deaths in the *Gazette*. He never took the slightest interest in politics or affairs of the day. Even when Lille was besieged, and, as we have seen, the Court was in a fever of anxiety for news from the seat of war, Monseigneur went out hunting as usual ; and on coming back one afternoon, he recited a long list of strange names of places he had passed in the forest to the Princess de Conti. “ Dear me ! Monseigneur,” said the lady, out of patience, “ what a wonderful memory you have ! It is a thousand pities you should load it with such trifles.” He seems to have been incapable of deep feeling of any kind, and his heartlessness extended even to his own family. When the Court was plunged into consternation by the sudden death of “ Monsieur,” the king’s brother, Monseigneur did not show the slightest emotion, but rode off to a wild-boar hunt ; and even when his old friend and companion, the Prince de Conti, was on his deathbed, Monseigneur drove past his house, along one side of the Quai de Louvre, to the opera, while the priests were carrying the Sacrament to the dying man along the other side, without even stopping his carriage.

Except on State occasions, he rarely went to Versailles, if he could help it, for he was oppressed by the formality and decorum of the Court, and felt the piety of his son, the Duke of Burgundy, to be a kind of reflection on his own life ; while, like the rest of the royal family, he never ventured to open his mouth in the king’s pres-

ence. Indeed, Louis, whatever his private feelings may have been, never showed his son the least affection, and always, says Saint Simon, treated him "with the air of a king rather than a parent." His opinion was rarely asked, and his advice—if he offered it—was rarely acted upon, except perhaps in the solitary instance of the Spanish succession.

In spite of the vigorous health of Louis, and the fatal prediction made at his own birth—"son of a king, father of a king, never a king"—Monseigneur seems to have occasionally indulged in the idea of succeeding to the throne. Only a few months before his death, Saint Simon tells us that he was found turning over some prints of the coronation ceremony with two of his lady friends, who were eagerly pointing out the various personages. "See, there is the man who will put the spurs on for you, and that one will give you the royal mantle, and here are the peers who will place the crown on your head." The anecdote is worthless except as illustrating the innocent vanity of the man.

Monseigneur's happiest days were passed at his own chateau of Meudon, where he lived at his ease like an ordinary country gentleman, keeping open house, hunting daily in the forest, and filling up his time otherwise pleasantly enough; playing cards and talking, seated with the ladies of his little Court. There was never any want of society; in fact, Meudon, like Carlton House in the days of George III., became the headquarters of "the Opposition,"—a cave of Adullam, a house of refuge for all the gay and turbulent spirits who sought an escape from the constraints of Versailles. Gathered there

might be found a brilliant and incongruous new society — “libertins,” as Louis disdainfully called them—sceptics and freethinkers, wits like La Fare and Bussy Rabutin, beauties like Madame de Soubise and the two Lislebonnes, soldiers like Vendôme and Luxembourg, poets and abbés, statesmen and philosophers, all taking their part in the famous “*parvulos*” of Meudon.

The queen of this society was “Madame la Duchesse,” to whose fascinations Saint Simon is obliged to do unwilling justice, much as he both feared and hated her; and associated with her was a name that carried with it a romantic interest, the Prince de Conti, a nephew of the great Condé.

“He was the constant delight of the world, of the Court, and of the army; the divinity of the people, the idol of the soldiers, the hero of the officers, the hope of all that was most distinguished in the army, the delight of the Parliament, the discriminating friend of the *savants*, and often the admiration of the Sorbonne, of lawyers, of astronomers, and of the profoundest mathematicians. He had talents of the finest kind—luminous, just, exact, vast, extensive—with an infinite knowledge of books,—one who forgot nothing and knew by heart all public and private histories and genealogies, their chimeras and their realities.”

When he talked, we are told that young and old alike hung upon his words, that men forgot the dinner-hour, and left the royal circle in the drawing-room at Marly in their eagerness to listen. In his younger days Conti had burned to distinguish himself as a soldier, and had shown that he inherited something of Condé’s spirit, when he charged at the head of the household troops and saved the day at Neerwinden. But Louis, according to Saint

Simon, was jealous of his brilliant talents,¹ and Conti found himself at the age of thirty the only prince of the blood-royal left without even the command of a regiment. This neglect preyed upon his mind, and, to drown his grief and disappointment, he plunged into the wildest dissipation, and when the coveted opportunity of distinction came at last, it was too late. His health had been undermined by his excesses, and he sank into a rapid decline. The crowds who filled the churches night and day offering prayers for his recovery, and the incessant stream of visitors that filled the ante-rooms of his house in Paris, showed how strong a hold his character had taken on public feeling. There must have been something singularly fascinating about this prince, when, in spite of his notorious profligacy, we find him spoken of with warm affection by such men as Fénelon and Bossuet, Chevreuse and Beauvilliers.

Saint Simon says of Conti—"This man, so charming, so amiable, so delightful, loved nothing; he had and desired friends as one has and desires furniture;" evidently forgetting that in another passage he has spoken of his strong affection for his sister-in-law, Madame la Duchesse,—an affection that was almost romantic in its constancy and hopelessness, and that ceased only with his death. Even when elected King of Poland, he was not sorry to give up the barren honour to the Elector of Saxony, and return to the charmed circle

¹ We give Conti's story as Saint Simon has given it, but he does not even allude to the scandal of 1686 (mentioned by both Madame de Maintenon and Madame de Sévigné), and which was probably the reason why the king always regarded this brilliant prince with such special disfavour. Conti was, if anything, a worse character than Vendôme.

at Meudon. "It was too much to expect," says Saint Simon, "that the brilliancy of a crown should prevail over the horrors of perpetual banishment."

Everything that was evil in Saint Simon's eye came from Meudon. The place was "beset with dangers and pitfalls" and "infested by demons." The brilliant society collected there were all so many personal enemies bent on his destruction. Madame la Duchesse regarded him with special animosity. He was at daggers-drawn both with Antin and Vendôme, two of the leading spirits in the cabal; and some busybody had told Monseigneur that Saint Simon had called him "a great imbecile, whom any one could lead by the nose," and, so far as Monseigneur's sluggish nature was capable of strong feeling, he showed strong and not unnatural indignation on the subject. As the king was now seventy-three, there seemed every probability that Monseigneur would succeed him before long; and to Saint Simon, who knew how completely the Dauphin was in the hands of the clique that made Meudon their headquarters, his prospects in the next reign were of the gloomiest description.

But an unexpected deliverance appeared. Saint Simon had gone down to keep Easter, as usual, at his country-house, when he heard that Monseigneur had been suddenly seized with the small-pox, and was lying between life and death at Meudon. Saint Simon tells us with what "an ebb and flow of emotion" he heard this news, and how "the man and the Christian struggled with the man of the world and the courtier." In a torment of uncertainty he left La Ferté and returned to Versailles; and there he heard that Monseigneur had so far recovered, that his friends the fishwomen of Paris

had left their markets and come over in a body to congratulate their favourite prince. Saint Simon sought out the Duchess of Orleans (who, like himself, hated Meudon and all that belonged to it); and, as he puts it, “the drag was taken off their tongues in this rare conversation.” With the utmost frankness they condoled with one another on the prospects of Monseigneur’s recovery in spite of his age and corpulence; “and you may be certain,” sadly added the Duchess, with a spark of the wit of Mortemart, “if his Highness once gets over the small-pox, there is not the faintest chance of his dying of apoplexy or indigestion.”

But, even while Saint Simon and the Duchess of Orleans were thus charitably talking, a change had taken place for the worse at Meudon. Alarming symptoms suddenly showed themselves, and there was only just time to administer the last sacrament before Monseigneur lost consciousness, and an hour afterwards Fagon, the Court physician, announced that all was over.

The king had hurried from Versailles to Meudon at the first alarm of the Dauphin’s danger, but the Princess of Conti met him in the doorway and prevented his entering the sick-room, for he had never had the small-pox himself. Then, overcome by the shock (for he had loved his son after a fashion), he sank fainting on a sofa in the ante-room, while Madame de Maintenon sat by his side giving him what comfort she could, and “tried hard to shed some tears herself.” At last Louis was led to his coach, and drove off to Marly among a crowd of unfortunate valets and servants of Monseigneur’s household, all crying out that they had lost their master, and must die of hunger.

It was nearly midnight when a courier arrived at Versailles with the news of Monseigneur's death ; and Saint Simon has painted for us, as he only can paint, the details of the horribly grotesque scene that ensued when the long gallery was filled from end to end with crowds of half-dressed princes and courtiers roused from their beds ; and he has described for us every posture, every attitude, and every gesture in the scattered groups —each countenance telling its own history, as he feasted his eyes on the rich study of human nature,—unmoved himself except by a lingering dread that the sick man might, after all, have recovered, and at the same time heartily ashamed of such an unworthy feeling. The valets, he says, could not contain their “bellowings,” for they had lost a master “who seemed expressly made for them ;” the greatest part of the courtiers—“that is, the fools—dragged out their sighs with their nails, and with dry and wandering eyes praised the departed prince.” Some, again, remained buried in thought, and saying nothing ; others evidently relieved, but hiding their happiness by an assumed air of sadness, —“but the veil over their face was transparent, and hid not a single expression.” The Duke of Burgundy was strongly moved, and showed natural sorrow ; the Duchess, graceful as usual, had a troubled air of compassion, “which every one took for grief, but she found extreme difficulty in keeping up appearances, and when her brother-in-law [the Duke of Berry] howled—she blew her nose ;” the Duchess of Orleans, “whose majestic countenance told nothing ;” her husband weeping violently in a back room, where Saint Simon found him, to his great amazement, and implored him to dry his eyes at

once, “for every one who saw them red would consider it a most ill-timed comedy.” Then there was the “Meudon cabal” plunged into bitter grief at the sudden downfall of their hopes and schemes,—the Duchess of Berry in particular “showing horror mingled with despair painted on her face—a kind of furious grief, based not on affection but on interest.” Amidst it all,

“Madame,¹ arrayed in full dress, arrived on the scene howling, and, not knowing why or wherefore, flooded them all with her tears as she embraced them, and made the palace re-echo again with her cries, and presented the extraordinary spectacle of a princess who had put on her State dress at midnight to come and weep and lament among a crowd of women in their night-dresses, almost like masqueraders.

“In the gallery there were several tent-bedsteads placed there for security, in which some of the Swiss guards and servants slept, and they had been put out as usual before the bad news came from Meudon. While some of the ladies were talking most earnestly, Madame de Castries, who touched one of the beds, felt it move, and was much terrified. A moment afterwards the ladies saw a great bare arm suddenly draw aside the curtain and disclose to them a stout honest Swiss guard between the sheets, half awake and utterly dumfounded, and who took a long time to make out the company in which he found himself, though he stared intently at them all, one after the other; and at last, not thinking it proper to get up in the midst of such a grand assemblage, he buried himself in his bed and drew the curtain again. Apparently the good fellow had gone to bed before anybody had heard the news, and had slept so profoundly ever since as to have only just awoke. The saddest sights are often liable to the most absurd contrasts. This sight made

¹ Monsieur's widow,—see p. 62.

all the ladies near the bed laugh, and caused some alarm to the Duchess of Orleans and her friends who had been talking with her, lest they should have been overheard ; but, on reflection, they were reassured by the heavy slumber and stupidity of the fellow."

There was little sleep for any one else on that eventful night, and Saint Simon was himself astir again at seven in the morning ; but, he says, "such restlessness is sweet, and such awakenings have a pleasant flavour of their own."

CHAPTER XII.

THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF BURGUNDY.

THE nine months that followed Monseigneur's death was certainly the happiest period of Saint Simon's life. Not only was he free from a sense of impending evil from the "Meudon cabal," which, as we have seen, haunted him perpetually, but the young Duke of Burgundy, who now succeeded to his father's position as the Dauphin of France, became his intimate personal friend and supporter, and for the time being nothing could be brighter than his prospects. We are told that, when a boy, the new Dauphin had been passionate and wayward—furious with the weather when it rained, and breaking the clocks that struck the hour of his lessons ; and his pride was such, says Saint Simon, that "he seemed to look down from the height of the heavens on men as mere atoms, to whom he bore no resemblance, and scarcely even acknowledged the princees, his brothers, as intermediate links between himself and the human race." But, happily for himself, he came under the good influence of Fénelon and Fleury at this crisis of his life, and "God, who is the master of hearts, and whose divine spirit breathes where He wills, made of this

prince a work of His right hand, and he came forth from this abyss affable, gentle, humane, moderate, patient, modest, humble, and austere.” He passed indeed from one extreme to the other, and his piety and reserve at times tried the patience of his best friends at Court. He refused to be present at a ball given at Marly on Twelfth Night, because it happened to be the Feast of the Epiphany as well ; and once even Louis, when summoning him to a council of war, said ironically, “Come,—that is, unless you prefer going to Vespers.” He lived at this time the life of a recluse, absorbed in study, and constantly reading the “Blue-books” of his day,—long treatises on finance, on commerce, and on the internal administration of France, prepared for him by practical statesmen like Chevreuse and Beauvilliers.

It was through the good offices of these veteran politicians that Saint Simon owed his introduction to the young prince. “For many years they never lost the opportunity,” he says, “of inspiring him with feelings of friendship, esteem, and personal regard for me ;” and then, with that warmth of affection which was as strong a feeling with him as his hatred, Saint Simon made an idol of the young prince, and credited him with being nothing less than perfection both in head and heart. As has been seen, he supported him warmly when attacked for his conduct during the campaign of 1708 ; he was never weary of enlarging on his talents and capacity to the small circle of devoted friends who had, like himself, great hopes of Fénelon’s pupil ; and, as Saint Simon was never happy unless he had a pen in his hand, it probably needed very little persuasion on the part of Beauvilliers to induce him to put on paper his

views on what may be called the whole duty of a prince. It is an eloquent if a somewhat incoherent essay, and begins with a graceful compliment to Fénelon, whose hand “was so singularly formed by heaven to sow the good seed on a rich soil.” What the Dauphin most required was that knowledge of the world that can never be gained from books or the companionship of “a troop of women.” He must not carry his studies too far into life, much less waste his time on abstract science, on mechanics, or on frivolous experiments. He should leave such vanities to priests and recluses, and apply himself instead to the one master-science—that of government—to which all other sciences are but as stepping-stones. He should talk less to his confessor, and more to the statesmen and politicians of his day; he should make friends with men of different classes, and learn from each and all lessons of real life that would be of more value to a future king than all the folios of the Jesuits or all the learning of the Sorbonne; and he should gather this practical knowledge from the best men of their class, “as bees gather the sweetest honey from different flowers.” And thus he would become himself, as a true prince should be, “an epitome of the State.”

The Dauphin’s character seems to have received a fresh impulse after Monseigneur’s death. He left his study and his books, and began to mingle freely in society, talking sensibly and agreeably, and charming all alike by his polite and graceful manner. “He became a second Prince de Conti; people opened their eyes and ears, and asked one another if this was the same man they had known before, and if it was a dream or a reality.”

The king showed him every mark of confidence ; the Ministers had orders to take their portfolios to him, and acquaint him with all public business ; and we are told that in their turn they were astonished, though not altogether delighted, at the variety and depth of his information. As to Saint Simon, this change was like the realisation of some delightful dream. Here was a prince such as his fancy had pictured, impressed like himself with a sense of the dignity of the ducal order, of the usurpations of the “bourgeoisie” and the “bastards,” and of the necessity of reconstructing society on the old lines of feudalism. The prince and the duke had long interviews, in which they discussed and arranged the policy of the future ; but these interviews were kept a profound secret from all the world. But one afternoon

“The sitting was a long one, and after it ended we sorted our papers. He gave me some of his to put in my pocket, and he took some of mine. He shut them up in his desk, and instead of putting the rest in his bureau he left them outside, and began to talk with his back to the fireplace—his papers in one hand and his bag in the other. I was standing up near the bureau looking for certain papers, and holding some others in my hand, when all at once the door opened opposite me and the Dauphiness entered.

“The first *coup d’œil* of all three of us—for, thank heaven ! she was alone—the astonishment painted on our three faces, have never left my memory. This fixed stare, this statue-like immobility, this silence and embarrassment in all three of us, lasted longer than a slow *Pater*. The princess broke it first. She said to the prince in a very discomposed voice, that she did not think he was in such good company—smiling at him and then at me. I had time to smile also, and then lower my eyes before the Dauphin answered. ‘Since you find me so, madame,’ said he, smiling at the

same time, ‘be off with you.’ She stood an instant looking at him and smiling still more, and he at her, and then she turned a piroquette, went out, and closed the door, for she had not passed beyond the threshold.

“Never did I see a woman so astonished ; never (and I must use a slang expression) did I see a man so dumfounded (*penaud*) as the prince even after she had gone ; never was a man—for I must confess it—in such a terrible fright as I was at first, though I felt reassured as soon as I saw that she was not followed. As soon as she had shut the door—‘Well, sir,’ said I to the Dauphin, ‘if you had only chosen to draw the bolt !’ ‘You are right,’ said he, ‘and I was wrong ; but there is no harm done. Luckily she was by herself, and I will answer for her secrecy.’ ‘I am not at all troubled,’ said I—although I was mightily afraid all the time—‘but it is a miracle that she came by herself. If her suite had been with her, you would perhaps have got off with a scolding, but I should have been irrecoverably ruined.’”

However, the Dauphiness kept the secret, and in future these two conspirators were more cautious in their interviews, though they still met frequently, and built their castles in the air with all the ardour of young reformers. The key-note of their system was a sentence which the Dauphin had ventured to utter even in the drawing-room at Marly—that “kings are made for the people, and not the people for the king.” Society was to be reorganised on a more just and liberal basis in the next reign. The long ascendancy of the “*vil bourgeois*” was to come to an end ; there were to be no more plebeian Ministers like Colbert and Torey, no more officers and governors drawn from “the Third Estate ;” the powers of the old aristocracy were to be revived ; a council of sixty was to take the place of the Cabinet of six ; the abuses of centuries were to be

swept away ; all citizens were to be equal before the law, and share equally in the burdens of taxation ; there was to be a new France and a new people, not worn out with toil and misery, but free, contented, and industrious ; and above them, tier upon tier, were to rise the ranks of the peerage, culminating in the DUKES, second to royalty alone, and “the most precious jewels of the crown.” And, as in Plato’s Republic nothing was needed for its fulfilment but a prince who should be a philosopher as well, so in Saint Simon’s Utopia all was to be realised when the Dauphin became a king. The Duke of Burgundy was to be “the second Ezra, who should restore the temple, and lead back the people of God after their long captivity.”

The young Duchess of Burgundy was far more popular than her husband. She had brought with her to the jaded Court at Versailles all the freshness and spirit of a young girl of seventeen, and lighted up every corner of the gloomy palace like sunshine on a winter’s day. Louis himself almost idolised her, and showed her far more affection than he had ever shown to his own children. A letter of his addressed to Madame de Maintenon is still preserved, in which he graphically describes how greatly her first appearance had delighted him ; and he dwells upon her charms much as a veteran trainer would describe the points of some promising young colt. But her personal beauty was not so striking as her charming figure, her sweet expression, and her graceful carriage. “Her walk,” says Saint Simon, “was that of a goddess over clouds. The Graces sprang up of themselves at every step she

took. They adorned all her manners and her simplest words.”¹

Madame de Maintenon undertook her education, for she was hardly twelve years old when she arrived at Versailles, and she was constantly with her and Louis—indeed, the old king was never happy when the young girl was out of his sight. She would amuse him with her lively stories; would talk “slang” (*baragouinage*) in her Italian way; caress him, pinch him, turn over his papers, read his letters, mimic the Ministers almost to their faces, and interrupt the gravest conversation with some gay remark. One day Louis was talking to Madame de Maintenon over the chances of peace at the accession of Queen Anne. “My aunt,” said the Dauphiness, “you must allow that the queens govern better than the kings in England; and do you know why, my aunt?” Then, skipping about the room all the while, she went on—“Because under kings it is the women who govern, and the men under the queens.” The best of it was, continues Saint Simon, that both the king and Madame de Maintenon laughed heartily, and said she was right.

Nothing can be tenderer or more graceful than Saint Simon’s picture of the young duchess who had won all their hearts; and he passes lightly over her indiscretions, though one flirtation (innocent enough on her side) had a strangely tragical ending. The disappointed lover—an Abbé Maulevrier—grew so frantically jealous of his

¹ Saint Simon, consciously or unconsciously, is translating Propertius. Those who wish to see a more modern translation of these famous lines should consult Sir A. Helps’s ‘Realmah’ (i. 266).

supposed rival, a young captain in the Guards, that, after a hundred follies, he went raving mad, threw himself from a window in his delirium, and was miserably dashed to pieces. The young princess shed some bitter tears at the time, and did not recover her usually gay spirits for weeks afterwards. Yet neither her husband nor the king ever guessed the true reason of Maulevrier's death, and the secret, if there was one, was faithfully kept by those who knew it. Even in that Court of scandal and intrigue she had not made an enemy. "Ah, my dear Duke!" wrote Madame de Maintenon to De Noailles after her death, "who, indeed, that ever knew her, could help loving her?"

"One evening, at Fontainebleau, when the ladies and princesses were in the same room as herself and the king after supper, she had been talking nonsense in all kinds of languages, and said a hundred childish things to amuse the king, who delighted in them, when she noticed the two princesses of Condé and Conti looking at her, making signs to one another, and shrugging their shoulders with an air of contempt and disdain. The king rose and passed into a back room to feed his dogs, and the Dauphiness then took Madame de Saint Simon by one hand, and Madame de Levy by the other, and pointed to the two princesses, who were only a few paces from them. 'Did you see? did you see?' said she; 'I know just as well as they do that there is no common-sense in what I have just done and said, and that it is all wretched stuff: still, one must make a noise, and this sort of thing amuses him' (the king). Then, all at once, leaning on their arms, she began to dance and sing. 'Ha, ha! I laugh at it all! Ha, ha! I make fun of them, and I shall be their queen, and I have nothing to do with them either now or ever after, and they will have to reckon with me, and I shall be their queen,' still jumping and skipping

about, and playing the fool with all her might. Her two ladies begged her, in a low voice, to keep quiet, or the princesses would hear her, and all the people in the room would see her doing this. They even went so far as to say she was out of her mind, for she heard nothing but good advice from them; but she only began to dance more vigorously, and sing in a louder tone, ‘Ha, ha ! I make fun of them ! I don’t care for them, and I shall be their queen.’ And she only ceased when the king re-entered the room.

“ Alas ! she believed it all—this charming princess—and who would not have believed it with her ? It pleased God for our misfortunes to rule it otherwise, not long after this scene. She was so far from thinking of it herself, that on Candlemas-day, being alone with Madame de Saint Simon, she began to talk of the number of persons at Court whom she had known and who had died, and then of what she would do herself when she grew old, and of the life she would lead, and how there was scarcely any one left about her of the time of her own youth.

“ With her were eclipsed all joy, pleasure, and even amusement and every kind of grace. Darkness covered the surface of the Court ; she had animated it all,—had filled all places at once ; her presence had occupied and penetrated every corner of it. If the Court existed after her, it was only to languish. Never was a princess so regretted, and never was there one more worthy of regret. So the regret for her has never passed away, and involuntary and secret bitterness of heart has abided with us, together with a frightful void that nothing can fill up.”

Her death took place early in the year 1712. According to Saint Simon, she had been in perfect health up to that time, but had rashly taken some Spanish snuff given her by the Duke of Noailles, and the same evening she was attacked by an acute pain in the temples, followed by a violent fever. For several days

her sufferings were intense, and she gradually lost strength, as this mysterious disease fastened upon her system. The doctors tried the severe remedies then in fashion—opium, bleeding, and emetics—but without success. The fever increased, and, “like a devouring fire,” says Saint Simon, “preyed upon her night and day.” She was induced to make her last confession, though she would not make it to her own confessor; the prayers for the dying were said over her; the Sacrament was administered; and soon afterwards she sank into a stupor from which she never rallied.

It was known that the Dauphin was sickening of the same terrible fever, but, as long as he could stand, he could not be induced to leave his wife’s bedside. For the first few days of her illness he bore up against his sufferings, but at last his strength gave way, and he was carried to his rooms at Marly. Saint Simon saw him there for the last time, and was terrified at his wild and haggard looks, and at the livid marks on his face.

“ His attendants proposed to him, once or twice, to go to the king’s room, but he neither moved nor answered. I drew near and made him signs to go, and then proposed it to him in a low voice. Seeing that he still stayed and kept silence, I ventured to take him by the arm, to represent to him that, sooner or later, he must see the king,—that his Majesty was expecting him, and sorely desired to see and embrace him; and pressing him thus, I took the liberty to gently push him on. He threw on me a look that pierced me to the heart, and went. I followed him a few paces, and tore myself away from the spot to gather breath. I never saw him again from that moment. May it please God in His mercy that I may see him eternally, where his goodness has doubtless placed him ! ”

The king embraced his grandson “tenderly, long, and many times, their words being almost choked by tears and sobs ;” and, immediately after the interview, the prince was carried to his bed, and he never left it again. The same deadly fever that had carried off his wife had now attacked the husband. He lingered, as she had done, some four days in great agony, until death released him from his sufferings.

Scarcely a month afterwards both his young children sickened of the measles ; the elder died, and the younger brother’s life was only saved by most careful nursing. The little child, who thus escaped, lived to become afterwards Louis XV.

Thus, three Dauphins had died within a year, and the strangely sudden manner of their deaths revived those horrible suspicions that had hung about the Duke of Orleans all his life. He was now credited with being a wholesale murderer, in addition to his other sins. His notorious impiety, his scandalous life, and the hours passed by him in his laboratory, all served to strengthen the popular belief that he had deliberately poisoned the Dauphin, the Dauphiness, and their young child, to clear his own way to the throne of France. Medical evidence, also, seemed to point in the same direction ; for the seven doctors who had examined the bodies declared that some subtle and virulent poison must have been the cause of death, with the exception of Maréchal, who was firm in his opinion that it was a by no means unusual case of typhoid fever.

After being embalmed and lying in state, the remains of the Dauphin and Dauphiness were carried to their last resting-place in the Abbey of St Denis. As the *cortège*

passed by torchlight along the Rue St Honoré into the broad square of the Palais Royal, the crowds who lined the streets gave way to tears and sobs of grief; but when the face of Orleans was seen through the window of his coach, there was a furious uproar, for his presence in the procession was felt by all to be a sacrilege to the dead. Curses and execrations were heard on all sides; sticks were shaken and stones were thrown; and, had not the Swiss Guards thrust back the mob with their halberds, Saint Simon believes that the Duke would then and there have been torn to pieces.

But, with all his vices, Philip of Orleans was not a murderer. He was both soft-hearted and affectionate, and was, in his own way, attached to his young cousin, though their characters were so utterly unlike. After the Dauphin's death he had been found by some of the attendants stretched upon the ground, and sobbing as if his heart would break. But at Court no one believed in his innocence. Rumours of the strangest kind were spread to his discredit. It was said that a monk who had actually administered the poison had been arrested by the prefect of police; that his own wife was to be the next victim, and that the Duke then intended to marry the widow of the King of Spain. He indignantly demanded a public trial, and to be confronted with his accusers, and defied the judgment of his peers and the Bastille itself, insisting that, in justice to the blood of Henry IV., France must be convinced of his innocence. Louis only shrugged his shoulders. "I can tell you," he coldly answered, "that the only accusers you have with me are your own immorality and frightful laxity of principle." At Court he was shunned like a pariah,—no one

would come near him or speak to him ; and at last his solitude grew so insupportable that he left Versailles, and took up his quarters again in the Palais Royal, where, says Saint Simon, it seemed to be a wager between himself and his daughter (the Duchess of Berry) which of them could scandalise most both religion and morality.

Saint Simon was himself plunged in the most bitter grief by the sudden loss of the young prince. At first he was inconsolable. He shut himself up in his rooms, and would see no one : indeed, had it not been for his wife, he would have left the Court altogether, and retired to his country-seat. The light of heaven, he says, seemed to have faded from the earth ; the hand of death had robbed him of the most cherished and precious object of his life. His pathetic burst of sorrow recalls another occasion, when the heir of a great empire was suddenly cut off in the fulness of his youth and promise ; and Saint Simon's lament over the Duke of Burgundy echoes the spirit and almost the words of Virgil's lament over the young Marcellus. " You have just come back," he said to Beauvilliers after the funeral, " from burying the fortunes of France. She has fallen under this last chastisement. God showed her a prince whom she did not deserve ; the earth was not worthy of him ; he was already ripe for eternal blessedness."

" *Ostendunt terris hunc tantum fata, neque ultra
Esse sinunt.*"¹

¹ Fénelon wrote to Beauvilliers in much the same tone. " God," he says, " has taken from us all our hopes for Church and State. He had prepared this young prince for the noblest ends, and had shown him to the world, only to take him almost immediately to Himself."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LAST DAYS OF LOUIS XIV.

EVEN at this lapse of time there is something sad in reading Saint Simon's account of the last few years of the great king's reign. We feel—as Louis felt himself—that he has lived too long; that it would have been better for his fame to have died at the height of his glory and prosperity, than to have seen his country impoverished and exhausted by foreign war; to have seen the great names that had made his reign so famous, one after the other disappear from history; and to have seen his family through three generations go down to the grave before him. Death had been busy on all sides of him in these latter years. He had lost his wife, his only brother, his son, his favourite grandson, and above all his grandson's wife, the Duchess of Burgundy, whose death had created a void at Versailles which nothing could fill up. The great palace was like a desert without her, and with her the life and sunshine of the Court seemed to have passed away for ever. It was in vain that Madame de Maintenon tried every means of cheering Louis at this melancholy time. Musical evenings at the Trianon, scenes from Molière's plays, conversations

with his valets, the last new scandal, the last ill-natured jest of Lauzun, the last long story told by Villeroy,—all the trifles that had occupied and interested him had lost their charm. “What a punishment,” wrote his weary favourite, “to have to amuse a man who is no longer amusable!”

In some ways the king, though he had passed his seventieth year, still kept the vigour and energy of former days. He would ride and drive for hours in the snow and rain; he would make his periodical journeys from Versailles to Marly, and from Marly to Fontainebleau; and he would still give audiences to ambassadors, work whole mornings with his Ministers, and preside at councils of State. But when the work of the day was over, the long evenings passed in Madame de Maintenon’s room became more and more insupportable both to him and to her. She had grown deaf and almost blind—“a living skeleton,” she calls herself—and the two would sit for hours silent, forlorn, and brooding over the memories of the past, their solitude only broken by the arrival of a Minister with his tale of some fresh distress in the provinces; by Fagon, the doctor, now bent double with age, but with all his former bitterness of tongue; or by Père Tellier, the Jesuit, with his evil face and hateful insinuations.

There seemed to be a curse upon the house of Bourbon, for the Duke of Berry—the best and gentlest of the family—died suddenly at the age of twenty-eight. His horse had stumbled while he was out hunting, and thrown him so violently against the pommel of the saddle, that he bled to death from some internal injury. The heir was now the king’s great-grandson, a feeble and sickly child four years of age.

To add to the old king's troubles, a new clique was formed to divert the Regency and possible chance of succession to the throne from the Duke of Orleans to the Duke of Maine, the favourite son of Louis by Madame de Montespan. From his boyhood Maine had been petted and caressed by Madame de Maintenon; and when he grew up, honours and wealth without end had been showered upon "this viper on the hearth," as Saint Simon calls him. One Act of Parliament had removed the bar-sinister from his shield, a second had given him precedence of all the dukes in the peerage, and a third had placed him within the charmed circle of princes of the blood-royal, and made him capable of succeeding to the throne as if he had been one of the true "sons of France." Some years before his death, Louis had made a personal appeal to his son and grandson to protect Maine and his children, to whom he had just extended all the privileges enjoyed by their father; and he made the elder of them, aged ten, colonel of the Swiss Guards, and the younger, aged six, Master of the Artillery.

"When this had been decided by the king—that is to say, between him and Madame de Maintenon—the point was to declare it; and this declaration produced the strangest and most singular scene of any that occurred in all that long reign to any one who knew the king, and his intoxication with the sense of absolute sovereignty. When he entered his private room at Versailles on Saturday night, March 15th, after supper, and had given his customary orders, he advanced gravely into the anteroom, placed himself in front of his chair without sitting down, slowly passed his eyes over the whole company, and said to them, without addressing any one in particular, that he gave the children of the Duke

of Maine the same rank and honours as their father ; and, without a moment's interval, walked to the end of the cabinet, and called to him Monseigneur and the Duke of Burgundy. Then, for the first time in his life, this monarch so haughty, this father so severe, and such a master in his house, humbled himself before his son and grandson. He told them that, in view of their both successively reigning after him, he prayed them to acquiesce in the rank which he had bestowed on the children of the Duke of Maine,—to concede so much in consideration of the affection which he flattered himself they felt for him, and he for these children and for their father. He added that, at his great age, and considering that his death could not be far distant, he earnestly recommended them to their care in the most pressing manner he could, and he trusted that after his own death they would protect them out of regard for his memory.”

Both princes remained dumb with astonishment, and the king again implored them to promise that it should be so.

“The two princes looked at one another, scarcely knowing whether what was passing was a dream or a reality, without answering a word the whole time, until, as they were still more earnestly entreated by the king, they stammered out something or other, without giving a distinct promise. The Duke of Maine, embarrassed by their embarrassment, and much mortified that no distinct answer had passed their lips, threw himself down so as to embrace their knees. It was then that the king, with his eyes swimming in tears, implored them to allow the Duke to embrace them in his presence, and to reassure him by that mark of friendship. He still continued to press them to give their word, while the two princes, more and more astonished by this extraordinary scene, still kept muttering what they could, but without promising anything definitely.”

This remarkable scene had taken place while there was still every reasonable prospect of Louis being succeeded by his son or grandson. But the sudden death of two Dauphins had considerably narrowed the circle of direct heirs ; and in the event of the little child called the Duke of Anjou also dying, the crown of France would have gone to the Duke of Orleans. But this last enactment of 1710 had made it possible for the Duke of Maine to step in to the succession ; and it was the chance of this that filled up the measure of Saint Simon's indignation. He declared that for a king thus to degrade the sacred dignity of his crown by making the succession "despotically arbitrary," and to give to a bastard the privileges of a crown - prince, was "a crime and a sacrilege blacker, vaster, and more terrible than high treason itself." And after enumerating no less than fifty-seven successive stages by which Louis had extended the privileges of his natural children—"after reading this," Saint Simon concludes, "one will be less struck by the imagination of those poets who made the giants pile mountain upon mountain to scale the heavens."

This may be so ; but what strikes an impartial observer most, after reading this violent invective, is, that it was Saint Simon himself who was piling Ossa on Pelion—or rather, making mountains of molehills—in such a display of exaggerated indignation ; as, after all, Louis was only exercising the right of adoption, which has been a recognised prerogative of monarchy since the days of the Roman emperors,—it might almost be said, since the time of the patriarchs. Certainly, in the case of the Bourbons, as in the case of the Stuarts, the king's

natural children seem to have inherited more of the ancestral spirit than those born in the purple. Maine and his brother Toulouse were as superior in talent to Burgundy and Berry, as Monmouth and Berwick were to the unfortunate James II. or the still more unfortunate “Pretender.”

But Saint Simon's prejudices will not allow to Maine the possession of a single virtue. He was as false and unscrupulous, we are told, as Madame de Maintenon herself, and imposed upon Louis by an affected piety and simplicity,—“so little did the king realise what a rattlesnake he was cherishing in the bosom of his family.” But even all that had been already done for Maine did not satisfy him or his friends, and some further official sanction was needed to secure his future sovereignty. Accordingly, Père Tellier and Madame de Maintenon never rested, night and day, until by a sort of moral torture they had forced Louis to ratify with his own signature what Saint Simon calls “an enormous crime.” They played upon his fears of poison, which had haunted him ever since the Duchess of Burgundy's death, and they made his life miserable to him, until at last he gave way. One morning the Procureur-General and the President of Parliament were summoned to Versailles, and the king solemnly handed them a document “sealed with seven seals.” It was (he said with a weary sigh) his will, which he had been induced to sign as the price of his repose; it would probably be set aside after his death, like the wills of his predecessors, but such as it was, they must take it and guard it safely: and now he trusted he should be allowed to die in peace.

The astonished Ministers took the will, and solemnly deposited it, with all the security that iron bolts and doors could give, in a tower of the Palace of Justice at Paris. But though it had been so carefully sealed, its contents were generally known. Orleans was to be nominally Regent; but all real authority was to be vested in a council composed of the personal friends and adherents of Maine, who was himself to be the tutor and governor of the young king.

But in spite of his prospects of future grandeur, Maine was by no means easy in his mind. Between the princes and the peers, he felt that he might be crushed at any moment. “The sword of Dionysius hung by a hair above his head,” says Saint Simon, grandiloquently; and his sense of insecurity made him seek allies on all sides. He first made overtures to the councillors in the Parliament, and then to the dukes, promising great things apparently to both, but, if we may believe Saint Simon, only with the intention of embroiling the two parties in a personal quarrel. He had bribed the First President, he had cajoled the Parliament, he had deceived the peers with the false pretence of taking their side; but, after all, his perfidy had been found out. “He devoted himself to the powers of darkness, and the very powers of darkness would not receive him.” Saint Simon had an interview with him, and spoke out his mind (if we may take his own account) with his customary freedom.

“All at once, looking at him straight between the eyes—‘It is you, sir, who have engaged us [the dukes] in this affair, in spite of ourselves; it is you who have answered for the king, for the First President, and for the Parliament; and lastly, it

is you, sir, who have broken your word, and who have made us the plaything of the Parliament, and the laughing-stock of the world.'

"The Duke of Maine, usually so fresh-coloured and so easy in manner, became silent, and pale as a corpse. He would have stammered out excuses, and expressed his regard for the dukes, and for me in particular. I listened to him without taking my eyes off his for a single moment ; and then, at last, fixing my eyes more and more intently on him, I interrupted him, and said in a high and haughty tone, but all the time tranquilly and without anger : 'Sir, you are all-powerful,—you show it both to us and to all France; enjoy your power, and all that you have obtained : but' (raising my head and my voice, and looking into the very depths of his heart) 'sometimes occasions come when one repents too late of having abused one's power, and of having mocked and deceived in cold blood all the principal nobles of the realm, and this they will never forget.'

"Thereupon I brusquely rose, and turned to go without giving him a moment for reply. The Duke of Maine, with an air of utter astonishment, and perhaps of vexation as well, followed me, still stammering out excuses and compliments. I continued to walk on, without turning my head, as far as the door. There I turned round, and said to him with an air of indignation : 'Oh sir! to escort me to the door after what has passed is to add mockery to insult.' At the same moment I passed through the doorway, and walked off without once looking behind me."

The person whose interests were most affected by this "exaltation of the bastard" was undoubtedly the Duke of Orleans; but Orleans, with his easy and careless temper, was the last man to be personally moved by it. He was to a certain extent conscious of the dangers surrounding him; but it was difficult to tell whom he could trust, or what steps he could take to strengthen

his position. Even his own wife was supposed to favour her brother's (Maine's) claims. "We are lost in a wood," he said to Saint Simon, "and cannot take too much care of ourselves." And then he tried to forget his anxieties in the dissipations of Saint Cloud and the Palais Royal.

But, fortunately for him, his friends had more energy of character; and forward among them was his tutor, the Abbé Dubois, and, it need hardly be said, Saint Simon. They took decisive steps to rally their party round them. They secured on their side the great Marshals of France, the peers, the princes of the blood, the Jansenists, and many of the clergy, the Parliament, whose members had been slighted by Louis and duped by Maine, and lastly, the household troops—a picked body of ten thousand men—were to be kept in readiness, in case of a *coup d'état*, that, like the Praetorian Guards of old, they might decide the fate of the empire with their swords.

Frequent conferences of Orleans's friends were held, and their future policy discussed at length. As usual, Saint Simon was ready with a model constitution, much like the one he had before proposed to the young Duke of Burgundy. The Secretaries of State—"that tyranny of five kings"—were to be abolished, and a council of sixty was to take their place; the nobility were to be reinstated in their ancient privileges; the whole army of Government officials were to be sent about their business; and as the only means of extricating the country from the enormous debts contracted during the late war, a national bankruptcy was to be declared at once, since, in a choice of evils, it was better that the loss should

fall on the capitalists—"those voracious animals that had preyed upon the vitals of their country."

Their opponents, Saint Simon thought, should be treated with toleration, except that "the bastards" should be deprived of their ill-gotten honours. As to the Jesuits, it would be sufficient if Père Tellier was civilly dismissed to the college of La Flêche; and if Lallemand and Doucين—"the firebrands of the plot and most dangerous scoundrels"—were shut up in Vincennes without pens, ink, or paper. As to Madame de Maintenon, "there was nothing more to be feared from that fairy of nearly eighty; her powerful and fatal wand had been broken, and she had once more become the widow Scarron." Beyond allowing her personal liberty and a competence, all credit and consideration should be taken from her. She had deserved far worse treatment than this, both from the State and the Duke of Orleans.

At last the event which both parties had been so anxiously expecting came to pass. In the summer of 1715 the king's health showed signs of rapid decline. His appetite, usually so good, began to fail him; he lost flesh; and it seemed that the diet of strong soups and spiced meats prescribed by his physician, followed by a quantity of fruits and sweetmeats, had impaired his digestive powers. His own courtiers noticed his changed appearance, and wagers were openly laid at the Hague and at St James's that he would not live another three weeks. Still Fagon, his physician, persisted that there was no real danger.

But on the 10th of August, as he was walking in the gardens of Versailles, he suddenly staggered, and had to be carried into the palace, and his serious illness could

no longer be concealed. Still he held his council and gave audience as usual, although it was noticed when he received the Persian ambassador, that he tottered under the weight of his robes. He even persisted in being carried to hear Mass, and was present at a concert in Madame de Maintenon's room ; and, as he was being wheeled along one of the corridors, he met Madame de Saint Simon, who had been away from Court for a fortnight, and with his usual courtesy stopped his chair and spoke to her : but she declared afterwards that she should hardly have recognised the king, so terribly had his appearance changed in the last ten days.

On the 24th he dined in public for the last time, and was evidently growing weaker. But still he clung to life. On the Sunday the drums and hautboys were ordered to play as usual under his windows—for it was the Feast of Saint Louis—and his stringed band performed in the ante-chamber during dinner. But the same evening he was seized with a kind of fit, and his mind began to wander ; and so critical did his state appear to his doctors that Père Tellier and the Cardinal de Rohan were hastily summoned to his room, and he made his last confession and received the last Sacrament. Immediately afterwards he added a codicil to his will.

All day the galleries and ante-chambers were filled with a crowd of anxious courtiers, talking in low whispers, and trying to learn something from the valets and doctors who passed incessantly backwards and forwards from the room where the king was lying. His own dignity and presence of mind never left him. “Why

do you weep?" he said to some of the princesses ; " did you believe me to be immortal ? Must I not pay to God the tribute of my life which is His due ? " He had a last interview with the Duke of Orleans, and then summoned the gentlemen of his household to bid them farewell. With his usual grace of manner he thanked them all for their attachment and faithful services, and hoped they would be equally dutiful to the young king ; and seeing some of them shedding tears, he added : " I see that I have affected you, and I am also affected myself. It is time for us to part. Adieu, gentlemen ! I trust you will think of me sometimes."

" Then he ordered the little Dauphin to be brought to his bedside : ' My child, you are going to be a great king. Do not imitate me in the taste I have had for building and for war ; strive, on the contrary, to be at peace with all your neighbours. Render to God what is His due ; remember the obligations you are under to Him, and cause your subjects to honour Him. Follow good counsels, and try to be a comfort to your people, which I unfortunately have never been myself. Remember all that you owe to Madame de Ventadour ' " (the governess).

He took the boy in his arms and embraced him tenderly. " My dear child, I give you my blessing with all my heart ! "—more than once shedding tears himself—and the poor little prince (he was scarcely five years old) was then carried away by his governess, weeping bitterly.

Then Louis turned to Madame de Maintenon, and, pressing her hand, said, " What consoles me most of all is the hope that we may soon meet again ! " " But this tender compliment," says Saint Simon, " displeased this

ancient fairy, who, not content with being queen, apparently wished to be immortal as well." At the time, indeed, she made no reply, but afterwards remarked to her servant, Nanon—"A fine rendezvous he has given me! This man has never loved any one but himself!" And then she ordered her carriage and drove off to Saint Cyr.

The approaching death of the king had emptied the corridors and galleries of Versailles, and all the courtiers had thronged the rooms of the Duke of Orleans. But suddenly a rumour came that the king had rallied, and back they all rushed at once to the royal apartments. Orleans was amused at this trait of human nature. "My dear duke," he said to Saint Simon, who came to see him in his solitude, "you are the first person I have seen to-day;" and he added, laughingly, "If the king eats again, we shall see nobody but ourselves."

The doctors had brought Louis an elixir, said to be of marvellous efficacy, which a countryman had persuaded them to give him. "Sire, it will restore you to life." "I neither desire nor hope to live," replied the king, and he drank the potion with indifference—"for life or for death," he said, "as it shall please God." The drug, whatever its secret virtues were, seemed to arrest for a time the progress of the disease; but the relief was only temporary, and the gangrene, which had already shown itself in his limbs, spread upwards, and gradually paralysed his system. He was now conscious only at intervals, and it was seen that death must be very near. "You can go," said the confessor to Madame de Maintenon, who had been hastily summoned from Saint Cyr

—“you are no longer necessary to him ;” and she accordingly left Versailles for the last time.¹

The king’s calmness, in the intervals when he was conscious, seemed extraordinary even to his physicians. Was it, as they suggested, that his malady had deadened all mental as well as bodily sensation ; or was it, as others supposed, that he had been affiliated to the Order of the Jesuits, and that the “plenary benediction” he received from them had soothed and tranquillised his spirit ?

The prayers for the dying were now said over him, and he joined in the responses with a voice still so strong and clear that it was heard above the voices of the priests around him. Then, as his sufferings grew more terrible, he was heard repeating incessantly to himself : “*Nunc et in horâ mortis*—Have pity on me, O my God ! come to my aid ! hasten to succour me !” These were his last audible words. All that night he still lingered on in his last agony, and it was not till past eight o’clock on the following morning that death at length released him. The Jesuit, who had never left his bedside, placed a crucifix on his breast ; an officer in attendance stopped the palace clock at the fatal moment ; a herald threw open the windows of the chamber, stepped out upon the balcony, and, in accordance with immemorial custom, thrice proclaimed, “*Le*

¹ M. Théophile Lavallée—Madame de Maintenon’s most ardent apologist—wishes us to believe that she left the bedside of the king, when almost in the agonies of death, “for fear that the emotion caused by the sight of her tears might prejudice his health”—Famille d’Aubigné, p. 468.

roi est mort;" and a faint response came back from a few bystanders in the courtyard below, "*Vive le roi!*"

Thus, in his seventy-seventh year, after the most eventful reign in French history—a reign of so much glory and so much obloquy—the great king went to his rest at last. "He had survived," says Saint Simon, "all his sons and grandsons, except the King of Spain. France had never seen a reign so long or a king so old."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE REGENT.

As if repenting at having given us this touching picture of the king's death, Saint Simon goes on to say, that excepting his valets, the Ministers, and Government officials—"in fact what may be called the *canaille*"—no one felt his loss. "Paris and the provinces breathed again, and leaped for joy. The people, ruined, overwhelmed, and desperate, gave thanks to God with a scandalous delight for a deliverance that exceeded their most ardent expectations." His body was carried to Saint Denis with the slightest possible pomp and ceremony; no tears were shed, and there was no public mourning.

The Parliament was summoned the next day; and the chamber was thronged by peers and councillors with anxious and expectant faces—the Duke of Maine among them, "bursting with joy," smiling and self-satisfied—while through the open doors were seen crowds of curious spectators and files of guards who had been ordered to line the avenues. The king's will was read, and then Orleans made a spirited speech in vindication of his rights—alluding with a marked emphasis to "those who had dared to make profit of the feebleness

of a dying king." Fleury and D'Aguesseau eloquently supported him; and after a warm discussion, and an adjournment of the meeting, it ended (as Louis had himself foretold) in Orleans being declared Regent with full powers by a unanimous vote, while Maine was stripped of all authority, and every clause favourable to his claims found in the will was at once set aside. Even at this very meeting, when the future Government of the kingdom was at stake, Saint Simon's "small shrill voice" was heard protesting as to the rights of the dukes to remain covered when they addressed the Parliament (*affaire du bonnet*). "It was," he declared, "their most peculiar, most cherished, and most just prerogative!"

Public affairs during the king's minority were to be carried on by seven Councils—answering very much to our Public Departments, except that there was one of "Conscience" specially devoted to Church matters. Each council consisted of seven members; and above them all was that of the Regency, of which Saint Simon was himself a member. But these Councils had a brief existence, and within two years' time they were all abolished, with the exception of the Regent's select advisers.

Even more than either Alcibiades or Buckingham, the Regent was "all mankind's epitome." Two opposite natures seemed to be constantly struggling in him for the mastery, and his mother the Princess of Bavaria described this medley of good and evil in a well-known fable—"All the fairies had come to his birth, and each of them had given her son some talent, so that he possessed them all. But unluckily they had forgotten to invite one old fairy, who had disappeared for so

long that no one had thought of her. She came at last, leaning on her little wand, after the others had each made her present to the child ; and, growing more and more incensed at the neglect, she avenged herself by making all the talents given by the others absolutely worthless, and though he retained them all, none of them helped him in the least degree.”¹ Saint Simon, who had known the Regent from boyhood, thoroughly confirms this character of him. He was an accomplished painter and musician, yet a drunken supper-party afforded the pleasantest sights and sounds to him ; he had a taste for science and chemistry, yet would waste hours in foolish magical experiments ; he had learning, eloquence, and a marvellous memory for facts and dates, yet surpassed even his own *roués*² of the Palais Royal in ribaldry and profanity ; he was amiable, kind-hearted, and generous, yet “neither grace nor justice could be got from him except by working on his fears ;” he was brave almost to rashness in the field, but was destitute of any moral courage, timid, irresolute, and incurably lazy in all matters except pleasure.

Louis knew his nephew’s character as well as Saint Simon ; and once, when Maréchal, his surgeon, was talking of Orleans’s various accomplishments, and said that, if the prince had to work for his living, he would find five or six ways of getting it—“Yes,” said Louis, “my nephew is all you have just said. He is a braggart

¹ Macaulay has applied this fable to Lord Byron’s character in a well-known passage of his Essays.

² Orleans himself applied this word to his boon companions,—men who deserved to be “broken on the wheel”—or, as we might say, for whom hanging was too good.

of imaginary crimes" ("*c'est un fanfaron des crimes*"). I was quite amazed, says Saint Simon, at such a grand stroke of description coming from the king's mouth.

Saint Simon dwells at some length upon the mingled vein of superstition and scepticism in the character of Orleans, who was too clever, he says, to be an atheist, although he pretended to be one; and who, if a dangerous illness had attacked him, "would have thrown himself into the hands of all the priests and capuchins in Paris." But his great desire was "to raise the devil and make him speak," and for this purpose he would pass whole nights in the quarries of Vaugirard, uttering spells and invocations. Once while he was in this mood a clairvoyancer came to Paris, and brought with him a little girl who professed to see the future in a glass of water. Orleans invited them to the Palais Royal, and after testing the young girl's powers of prophecy with various questions, he at last asked her to describe what would happen at the king's death. (It should be noted that he told all this to Saint Simon in a conversation nine years before the king actually died.)

"She looked in the glass of water, and told him at some length all she saw. She accurately described the king's room at Versailles, and the furniture in it, precisely as it was when he died. She gave an exact picture of the king as he lay in his bed, and of everybody standing up close to the bed or in the room—a little child wearing a blue order, held in the arms of Madame de Ventadour—and at seeing her the girl uttered a cry of recognition, for she had seen her at Mademoiselle de Séry's. She then made them recognise Madame de Maintenon, and the singular figure of Fagon;¹

¹ Fagon, the physician, was bent nearly double with age and rheumatism.

Madame the Duchess of Orleans, Madame la Duchesse, the Princess of Conti : she again cried out as she saw the Duke of Orleans—in a word, she made them recognise by her description all the princes and servants, the nobles and the valets, whom she saw around the bed. When she had told everything she saw, the Duke of Orleans, surprised that she had not described to them Monseigneur, or the Duke and the Duchess of Burgundy, or the Duke of Berry, asked her if she did not see figures of such and such an appearance. But she persistently declared that she did not, and described over again those that she actually did see. This is what the Duke of Orleans could not understand, and what astonished him extremely then as it did me, and we vainly sought to discover what it meant. The event explained it all. We were then in 1706. All these four princes were at that time full of life and health, and all four were dead before the king's death. It was the same with M. le Prince, M. le Duc, and with the Prince de Conti—none of whom the little girl saw in the glass, though she saw the children of the two last named, as well as M. du Maine, his children, and the Count of Toulouse. But, till the event took place, all this was left in obscurity.

“ After thus satisfying his curiosity, the Duke of Orleans wished to know what his own fate was to be. But nothing more could be seen in the glass. Then the man, who was there, offered to show the Duke his own figure painted as it were upon the wall of the room, provided that he was not afraid of seeing it there ; and in about a quarter of an hour, after the man had gone through some gesticulations before them all, the figure of the Duke of Orleans, clothed as he was then and large as life, suddenly appeared upon the wall as though in a picture, with a crown upon his head. This crown was not that of France, nor that of Spain, nor that of England, nor that of any empire. The Duke, who gazed at it with all his eyes, could not divine its nature. He had never seen one like it. It had only four circles, and nothing on its summit. This crown covered the head of the figure.

“ I take the opportunity [Saint Simon concludes] to show

from the obscurity of these two prophecies, the vanity of this sort of curiosity, the just deceit of the devil which God allows in order to punish the curiosity which He forbids—the clouds and darkness which result from it, in place of the light and satisfaction sought for. Orleans was then a long way from being Regent of the kingdom, or from even dreaming of such a thing ! Yet this it was perhaps that this singular kind of crown announced to him. All this took place in Paris, at the house of his mistress, in presence of their most intimate circle of friends, on the very evening before the day on which he told me of it, and I thought the story so extraordinary that I have given it a place here,—not in the way of approval, but as a simple statement of fact.”

Any virtuous instincts that Orleans might have originally possessed had been hopelessly perverted by the fatal influence of his tutor Dubois. This man had practised on the facile nature of his pupil, and instilled into his heart “an execrable poison.” He taught him to disbelieve in the very existence of moral principle ; to regard virtue and vice as mere conventional fictions dressed up by priests ; that “honour in men and chastity in women were chimeras, and had no real existence in any one, except in a few poor slaves of prejudice,” and that in his natural heart every man was vile and wicked. Orleans used occasionally to rally Saint Simon on his superior virtue, as being an old-fashioned complaint that he ought to have got over in his childhood ; and he certainly did his best to show that he was not himself hampered by any such lingering sentiments of morality. “The more debauched a man was,” we are told, “the more he esteemed him.” His most outrageous orgies were purposely celebrated on the holiest days of the year, and his most familiar friends were selected from the most profi-

cient graduates in vice. Their mean origin was rather a recommendation in his eyes, for he had a thorough contempt for nobles of his own rank,—in fact, he thought they were, if possible, more easily bought and sold than the rest of mankind ; and he was disposed to agree with his mistress, Madame de Sabran, who declared that “God at the creation had taken what was left of the clay, and made of it the souls of princes and lackeys.”

But Orleans was something more than a man of pleasure. Up till five o'clock in the day he was the Regent, and, as such, devoted himself to public business. He presided at his council, consulted with his colleagues, dictated to his secretaries, received ambassadors ; at two o'clock he took his chocolate, for he never dined, and then paid visits or entertained visitors up till five. After that hour he considered himself absolved from official cares, and rushed off like an emancipated schoolboy to the Luxembourg or Palais Royal, where he amused himself for the rest of the evening. “I was never present,” says Saint Simon, “at one of his suppers. . . . They were scenes of unbridled licence ; and when the guests were very drunk and had made a good deal of noise, they went to bed, to begin the same game again the next day.” Yet in his wildest moments Orleans never let a State secret escape him, and the most favoured of his mistresses was never admitted to his confidence. He treated them all, we are told, just as they deserved to be treated—giving them little power and very little money. Whatever the Regent's follies might have been, he was not to be too easily duped by a Maintenon or a Pompadour.

One generous act of the Regent, in the early days of his power, deserves to be recorded. He sent for the list

of all the *lettres de cachet* issued during the last reign—the number has been computed at something like thirty thousand—went carefully through the names of those imprisoned in the Bastille, and restored them all to liberty, excepting such as were charged with treason or grave offences.

Among the poor wretches thus set free was one unhappy man who had come from Italy, an entire stranger to France, some thirty years before, and who had been arrested by the police the moment he set foot in Paris, and thrown into the Bastille. No one knew his offence; no record of any crime appeared against him in the prison books; and the officials themselves believed “it was a mistake.”

“When his liberty was announced to him, he sadly asked what he could do with it. He had not, he said, a farthing in the world—he did not know a soul in Paris—not even the name of a single street, nor a person in all France. His relations were probably dead, and his property divided among strangers, during his long absence. He did not know what he could do with himself if set free, and he begged to be allowed to remain in the Bastille for the rest of his days, with food and lodging. This favour was granted him.”

Orleans would also have recalled the Huguenots, and repaired, if he could, some of the mischief caused by that signal act of tyranny which had banished them from France. But, strange to say, Saint Simon strongly opposed such a measure—though on political, not on religious, grounds. There would be another League, he declared, and probably another civil war, if these exiles were allowed to return.

The embarrassed state of the finances was the chief

difficulty with which the Regent had to deal. The national debt amounted to more than £120,000,000 in English money, while there was not more than £30,000 of available cash in the Treasury. Various expedients for raising money were adopted. An edict was passed to control and liquidate some of the floating debt : a Chamber of Finance was appointed, and the capitalists had to disgorge part of their gains ; and then the value of the gold louis was raised, and the coinage practically debased. When matters seemed most hopeless, a Scotchman, named Law, proposed a highly tempting scheme to the Regent. Without tax, without additional expense, without trouble or danger to any one, money, he declared, was to double itself and circulate rapidly through the country, by the simple expedient of putting it into his bank, and receiving the equivalent in paper notes. The Regent caught at the idea : a National Bank was established, and shares in it were eagerly sought for, while the paper notes issued by it at once rose to a premium.

But, as Saint Simon sagaciously asked, how was this paper currency to be regulated ? Such a system as Law's might answer in a limited monarchy : but France was not like England ; and “the expense of a war, the rapacity of a Minister, a favourite, or a mistress, would soon exhaust the bank, and ruin the holders of notes.” Nor did the Parliament view the scheme with any favour. They refused to ratify the Regent's edict, which authorised the purchase of Law's bank by the State ; and they even threatened to hang Law himself in front of the Palais de Justice. But their remonstrances were quietly overruled.

In 1717, Law started the Mississippi Company—as

wild and illusory a scheme as the South Sea Bubble itself. Magnificent promises were held out to the shareholders — unlimited wealth from the gold-mines of Louisiana, and a monopoly of French commerce. The shares at once went up to twenty times their value ; enormous fortunes were made in a few hours ; paper notes were issued in ceaseless abundance ; and Law's offices, in the narrow Rue de Quincampoix, were thronged night and day by eager speculators. “ He lived in a state of siege,” says Saint Simon, “ and saw people clamber in through his windows from the garden, or drop down the chimney into his private room. Men only talked of millions.”

Saint Simon himself was sceptical both as to the bank and the company, and he refused to take a share in either one or the other. “ Since the days of Midas,” he said, “ no one before this Scotchman had ever been gifted with the power of turning what he touched into gold ; and this skilful jugglery, which put Peter’s money into Paul’s pocket, must, sooner or later, end in utter ruin.” It was even as he anticipated. The foolish prodigality of the Regent, and the extravagant amount of paper-money issued by Law, produced their natural consequences. There was a vague suspicion, a panic, a run upon the bank ; the Prince of Conti alone carried off three waggon-loads of gold, instead of paper, in an afternoon : then every one tried to realise money in place of his notes before the crash came—and then the bubble burst. In spite of every effort made by the Regent to bolster up the system, even going so far as to confiscate all the gold and jewellery found in private houses, Law’s notes were found to be waste paper ; eighty thousand

families were ruined, and, amidst the general distress and consternation, Law himself escaped from France.

Strangely enough, Saint Simon does not blame this adventurer. “There was neither avarice nor roguery in his composition,” he tells us. “He was the dupe of his own Mississippi scheme. . . . He reasoned like an Englishman—not knowing how opposed to the spirit of commerce is the frivolity of the French nation, their inexperience, and their greediness to enrich themselves by one lucky stroke.”

It may be doubted if Saint Simon played quite the important part under the Regency that he had pictured to himself. He was, no doubt, one of Orleans’s oldest and most trusted friends; but then Orleans was keen-sighted and suspicious to the last degree. He only laughed at Saint Simon’s warmth and impetuosity; he ridiculed the pretensions of “the dukes;” he turned off the most serious questions with some buffoonery; and, if he could not otherwise escape, he trifled and temporised, or made promises that were never kept.

But, in spite of many disappointments, Saint Simon enjoyed some days of signal triumph; and among them may be reckoned that on which the Regent was at last persuaded to take heart of grace, summon a Bed of Justice, and “humble the arrogance of the Parliament, and strip the false plumage from the king’s bastard children.”

Maine, whose degradation was the special object of this Bed of Justice, seems to have offered a passive resistance; but his wife showed more spirit than her husband, and declared she would set fire to the four corners of the kingdom sooner than give up his rights.

She was an imperious, self-willed, fantastic little personage—small in stature, like all the Condés, but with a restless and volatile temperament. She reigned at Sceaux like a queen of Lilliput, giving endless *fêtes* and entertainments—now acting “*Athalie*,” and now studying astronomy or reading Greek with the “learned Malezieux.” She turned the night into day, and spent her husband’s money in the most reckless fashion. “But he never dared say a word,” says Saint Simon, “for fear of her going quite mad; as it was, she was more than half crazed.”

For the present, however, she gave up her pleasures to search all the old chronicles she could find to prove from history that the natural sons of kings were as good as princes of the blood-royal; and Madame de Staal tells us how she found the Duchess half buried under a pile of huge folios, “like Enceladus under Etna,” and how laboriously she examined them with the assistance of some distinguished antiquaries. But, as her friend observes, these *savants* probably knew more about the customs of the Chaldeans than of the Court of Versailles, and precedents taken from the family of Nimrod would scarcely apply to the family of Louis XIV.

But all the antiquaries in the world could not have averted the inevitable humiliation of Maine. His enemy, Saint Simon, had been working night and day, arranging the details of the Bed of Justice where the sentence of degradation was to be formally pronounced; and he tells us of “the rosy thoughts,”—“the sweet and unalloyed delight of the prospect.”

At last the fatal day dawned, “so immeasurably and

perseveringly desired," when the insults and indignities of a lifetime were to be wiped away in one supreme hour of revenge. Every step had been taken to guard against the possibility of resistance. The household troops were under arms, and the approaches to the Tuileries were lined by Swiss guards and musketeers. The Regent's Council met, and without even putting the question to the vote, two decrees were read—the first annulling a recent enactment of the Parliament on a question of finance, and the second depriving Maine of his rank and honours as a prince, and reducing him to the position of a simple duke. And then the Parliament were summoned in their turn to hear these sentences of humiliation. Saint Simon feasted his eyes on the spectacle of their astonishment and impotent indignation.

"This was the moment when I relished, with a delight utterly impossible to express in words, the sight of these haughty legislators, who had dared to refuse us the salutation, prostrate on their knees, and rendering at our feet a homage to the throne, while we (the peers) were seated, with our heads covered, at the side of the same throne. It is this situation and these postures that alone plead, with the most piercing evidence, the cause of those who, in very truth and reality, are the king's right-hand men (*laterales regis*), and opposed to these representatives (*vas electum*) of the Third Estate. My eyes, fixed and glued upon these haughty *bourgeois*, scanned all these grand gentlemen of the bar, as they knelt or stood, with the ample folds of their fur robes—paltry rabbits' fur, that tried to imitate ermine—swaying to and fro at each long and redoubled genuflexion, that only ceased when the king gave his orders through the Keeper of the Seals, and these heads uncovered and humiliated on a level with our feet.

“ When the President of Parliament had finished his remonstrances, the Keeper of the Seals ascended the steps to the throne, and then, without asking further advice, returned to his place, looked at the President, and said, ‘ *The king wishes to be obeyed, and to be obeyed at once.*’ This grand speech was a thunder-stroke that confounded the presidents and counsellors in the most wonderful way. They all bowed their heads, and it was long before the majority raised them again.”

But there was even a greater triumph to come. The second decree, which placed Maine at the bottom of the list of dukes, and deprived him of all his privileges, including his office of governor to the king, was read and registered, to the consternation of his friends.

“ The Chief President, stunned by the last blow, made such a surprisingly long face, that I thought his chin had fallen on his knees. . . . But all the while I was myself dying of joy. I was so oppressed that I feared I should faint: my heart, dilated to excess, found no room to beat. The violence I did myself in order to let nothing escape me was infinite; yet nevertheless this torment was delicious. I compared the years and time of my servitude,—those hateful days when, dragged like a victim at the wheels of the Parliament, I had so many times adorned the triumph of the bastards—those various degrees by which they had mounted to this height above our heads,—I compared them, I say, to this court of justice and of arbitration—to this their frightful disgrace, which, at the same time, raised us, the peers, by the force of the counter-shock. . . . I thanked and congratulated myself that it was through ME that all this had been done. I thought of the dazzling splendour of such a revenge in the presence of the king and so august an assemblage. I was triumphant,—I was avenging myself,—I swam in the delights of vengeance. I enjoyed to the full the accomplishment of the most ardent and most continuous desires of my life.”

The Duke of Maine bore his humiliation with his usual coolness ; but the Duchess was furious when she heard of it. “ All that is left me is the disgrace of having married you,” she said bitterly to her husband ; and when ordered to give up her rooms at the Tuilleries, in her passion she broke the windows, the china, and everything she could lay her hands on. Then, to revenge herself, she engaged in a foolish conspiracy with Spain to depose the Regent. Her letters were intercepted, and both she and her husband, with many of their friends, were arrested and imprisoned for some months, until Orleans, with his careless good-nature, released and forgave them all.

Paris received an illustrious visitor in 1717—the Czar, Peter the Great. Saint Simon, who “ stared at him for an hour, without taking his eyes off him,” was much impressed by his commanding presence and “ unmistakable air of greatness,” although he notices the curious spasm that every now and then distorted his face and gave him “ a wild and terrible look.” Everything was done by the Regent to entertain his imperial guest. Splendid rooms were prepared for him at the Louvre, which, however, the Czar found too splendid for comfort : there was a parade of the household troops ; a hunt at Fontainebleau ; a Court ball, and a grand opera, where the Czar scandalised the audience by calling for beer, and drinking it in the royal box. He was impatient of State ceremonies, and liked nothing better than to wander about Paris unattended, talk to the workmen employed on the revolving bridge, taste the soldiers’ soup at the Invalides, and drive from one end of the town to the other in a hackney-coach. If we may believe Saint

Simon, he showed himself a true Russian in his taste for strong liquors. He drank a bottle or two of beer, and the same quantity of wine, at dinner, and “a quart of brandy afterwards, by way of liqueur.” His suite ate and drank even more than their master; and the chaplain, like a worthy son of the Church, “consumed half as much again as the rest of the suite.” In other respects, their filthy habits made them as unwelcome visitors in Paris as afterwards at Evelyn’s house at Deptford.

After a visit of six weeks, the Czar left Paris, greatly delighted with all he had seen, but much troubled in mind by the excessive luxury of the Court, which he prophesied must, sooner or later, bring ruin on the country.

CHAPTER XV.

CARDINAL DUBOIS.

IT was Saint Simon's fate, up to the last hour of his political life, to be thwarted and overruled by the man whom, of all others, his soul most abhorred, yet who was not only the most able politician of his day, but had considerably more influence with the Regent than Saint Simon himself: in fact, he had made himself "his master's master." His other biographers (Capefigue alone excepted) represent Dubois as having been, in actual life, much what he is said to be in these Memoirs—"soft, supple, cringing, a flatterer and false admirer, . . . with falsehood written on his brow; immeasurably depraved in morals, . . . despising and deriding good faith, honour, probity, and truth."¹

So much may be granted; but when Saint Simon says that "he was destitute of all talent," and that "his

¹ One evening, when the Prince Regent was dining at Holland House, the conversation turned upon the question as to who was the wickedest man that ever lived. "The Regent Orleans, and he was a *prince*," said Sydney Smith, looking at the Prince Regent. "I should have given the preference to his tutor, the Abbé Dubois, and he was a *priest*, Mr Sydney," was the quiet rebuke of his Royal Highness.

capacity was *nil*,” it is clear that in this case, as in other instances, he has failed to distinguish between the moral and intellectual qualities of the enemy whom he thus mercilessly assails. The abilities of Dubois are as notorious as his profligacy. He had considerable humour, learning, and knowledge of men and books ; a taste for letters and science ; great powers of application ; and had shown singular firmness and dexterity in his defeat of Cellamare’s conspiracy, and in the negotiations which resulted in the Quadruple Alliance. But this triumph of diplomacy was an additional crime in Saint Simon’s eyes. He was himself a Jacobite at heart, and it was with bitter indignation that he saw the Regent sacrifice the Stuart cause which Louis XIV. would never give up, even in his heaviest reverses, while the unfortunate son of James II. had a price put upon his head, and was forced to seek an asylum in Rome.¹ Saint Simon fretted and fumed at this English alliance. Both Dubois and the Regent, he declared, were “too much the humble servants of the house of Hanover ;” but he accounts for their apostasy from the traditional policy of France by the “Anglomania” of the prince, and the heavy annual pension paid by the English Cabinet to the Minister.

“Every ecclesiastic,” says Saint Simon, “who once succeeds in getting a footing in the government of his country—however base his origin—makes it his sole object in life to become a Cardinal, and is ready to sacrifice everything unreservedly to this end.” Dubois

¹ There are two letters preserved among the manuscripts in the British Museum from “Jacques, Roy,” to “my cousin, the Duke of Saint Simon,” dated from Albano in 1721.

soon began to mount the steps of this ladder, and one morning he told the Regent that he had just had “a pleasant dream of being Archbishop of Cambray,”—the see being then vacant. Even Orleans was scandalised at the proposal, for, putting aside the question of his profligate life, Dubois was not even in holy orders. “Make a scoundrel like you archbishop ! Where will you find another scoundrel who will consecrate you ?” Dubois assured him that there would be no difficulty—in fact, the man was in the next room : his own chaplain, the Archbishop of Rheims, would do all that was necessary. The Regent reluctantly gave his consent, and Dubois was ordained deacon and priest at the same service, and shortly afterwards he was actually consecrated archbishop.

He showed no false modesty on the occasion ; and when one of his colleagues sneered at the appointment with what Saint Simon calls “pathetic malignity,” Dubois justified himself by the precedent of Saint Ambrose, who had been consecrated archbishop even before he was baptised. “I was so horror-stricken at such profanity,” says Saint Simon, “that I rushed to the door of the room, that I might hear no more.” He implored Orleans, by all that was most sacred, not to attend the consecration, as it would be a mockery to God and an insult to the Church ; and Orleans faithfully promised that nothing should induce him to be present. But the first thing Saint Simon heard the next morning was that the Regent had set off in full state, with his usual escort, for the church where the consecration was to take place. One of his mistresses had persuaded him to change his mind even in that short interval.

Once made archbishop, Dubois began to move heaven and earth to obtain a cardinal's hat. He entreated, promised, and bribed in all directions, even getting the Pretender, as well as George I., to support his claims. The Regent, with his usual inconsistency, first declared "he would throw the little impudent rascal into the lowest dungeon if he should venture even to think of such a thing," and the next day told Torcy to write to Rome in Dubois's favour.

Fortunately for the Regent's candidate, the new Pope, Innocent XIII., happened to be a Frenchman (Conti); and in 1721, after expending an incredible sum in bribes, Dubois was at last made happy with the red hat; but, as he complacently said, "what he valued far more than the Roman purple was the *empressement* shown by all the European sovereigns in procuring it for him."

If we may believe Saint Simon, Dubois's new dignity as a prince of the Church made not the least difference in his manners or language.

"One morning he could not find something he wanted, and began to rage and swear at his clerks, saying, that if there were not enough of them, he would engage forty or fifty or a hundred more, and making the most frightful noise. His secretary, Verrier, listened to him tranquilly, and the Cardinal asked him if it was not a horrible thing to be so badly used, considering the expense he had been put to; and then he flew into a fresh fit of passion, and insisted upon Verrier's answering him.

"'Monseigneur,' said Verrier, 'take one more clerk, and let his only employment be to swear and storm for you, and all will go well. You will have much more time for other matters, and you will be much better served.'

"The Cardinal began to laugh, and was appeased."

We may select one more out of the many anecdotes which Saint Simon tells us of Dubois, and then we may leave his Eminence.

Madame de Conflans, governess to the Regent's children, was persuaded, much against her will, that she ought to pay a complimentary visit to Dubois on his new accession of dignity.

"She arrived at Versailles just as people were leaving dinner, and was shown into a large room where there were eight or ten persons waiting to speak to the Cardinal, who was standing near the fireplace with some woman, to whom he was giving a taste of the rough side of his tongue. Fear seized Madame de Conflans, who was but small, and looked even smaller than she was. Still, she timidly approached as this woman retired. The Cardinal, seeing her advance, asked her sharply what she wanted.

"'Monseigneur!' said she; 'oh, Monseigneur——'

"'Monseigneur!' interrupted the Cardinal; 'come, it can't be done.'

"'But, Monseigneur——' she said again.

"'By all that's infernal!' interrupted the Cardinal again, 'I tell you once more, as I told you just now, it can't be done.'

"'Monseigneur——' Madame de Conflans began again, wishing to explain that she wanted nothing; but at this word the Cardinal seized her by the shoulders, twirled her round, gave her a thump on the back, and pushed her out.

"'Go to the devil!' said he, 'and leave me in peace.'

"She thought she should have fallen flat on the ground, and rushed away in a fury, shedding hot tears, and arrived in this state at the Duchess of Orleans's house, to whom she told her story as well as her sobs would allow her.

"People were so accustomed to these wild freaks of the Cardinal, and this was thought so singular and amusing,

that the recital of it caused shouts of laughter, which completely crushed the poor Conflans, who made a solemn vow she would never again set foot inside this madman's house."

In 1721, two marriages were arranged to cement the alliance between France and Spain. The young king was betrothed to the Infanta (then of the mature age of three); and the Prince of the Asturias, the heir-apparent of Spain, was to marry the Regent's daughter, Mdlle. de Montpensier. A special ambassador was to be sent on the occasion, to demand formally the hand of the Infanta and to sign the marriage-contract; and Saint Simon easily persuaded Orleans to nominate him for this important mission. His only object in going, he is careful to add, was to secure the rank of Grandee for his second son, and possibly the order of the Golden Fleece for the eldest. "I so thought to do a good stroke of business for my family, and to return home in great content."

His journey, which took him about three weeks, is described with his usual humour and vivacity; and from the moment he crossed the frontiers he seems to have got rid of his care and discontent. "As I crossed the Pyrenees," he says, "I left with France the rain and bad weather, and found a pure sky and a charming temperature, with scenery and views changing every moment." As he went on, "all seemed flowers and fruits." For once in his life he found himself appreciated at what he considered his proper value, and it is with evidently gratified vanity that he tells us how he was *fêted* on his progress from town to town; how he was received with enthusiasm by the populace of Madrid, and "almost stifled with compliments" by the Spanish grandees; how

he went to Court in a State carriage drawn by eight horses, with twenty-five other coaches following his own ; with what dignity he advanced up the long Hall of Mirrors; and with what a stately grace Philip V. announced his satisfaction at the marriage, “ using such a marvellously judicious choice of words and expressions, that I thought I heard that grand master of ceremonies, the late king [Louis XIV.], himself addressing me.”

Madrid was illuminated, a State ball was given in honour of the occasion, and Saint Simon, who seems to have amused that solemn Court by his vivacity and sprightliness, received the royal command to dance. He tells us that, though he had not danced for thirty years and had a heavy coat on, he bore himself bravely in minuet and quadrille ; and that he was refreshed, after his exertions (like Mr Pepys) “ by a glass of excellent neat wine.”

Their Catholic Majesties also commanded his attendance at a royal battue, where the game included almost every four-footed creature, from wild-boars to polecats. Saint Simon’s own contribution would scarcely have been a matter of congratulation to a modern sportsman. “ I shot a fox,” he says complacently, “ a little before the proper time ;” by which he means that the Crown-Prince, who was in the same *cache*, ought to have had the chance of shooting the fox first,—for at the battue, as everywhere else, royalty took precedence.

Then he visited the Escurial, where he showed such insatiable curiosity, and asked so many embarrassing questions, that one of the monks in charge completely lost his temper.

"And so we did the round of the mortuary chamber, talking over and discussing all we saw. As we passed to the further end of the room, the coffin of the unhappy Don Carlos met our view.

"'As for him,' said I, 'it is well known how and why *he* died.'

"At this speech the fat monk stammered, and maintained that he had died from natural causes, and began to declaim against the stories which he said had been spread about his death. I only smiled, and said I allowed it was not true that he had died by having his veins opened. These words completed the irritation of the monk, who began to babble in a sort of fury. At first I amused myself by listening in silence, and then I remarked that the king, soon after his arrival in Spain, had the curiosity to have the coffin of Don Carlos opened, and that I had been told by a man who was present (it was Louville), the prince's head had been found between his legs, and that his father, Philip II., had caused him to be beheaded in prison in his own presence.

"'Very well!' cried the monk, in a furious passion; 'apparently it was because Don Carlos had thoroughly deserved his fate, for Philip II. had permission from the Pope to do it.' And then he began to extol with all his might the marvellous piety and justice of Philip II., and the boundless power of the Pope, and denounced the heresy of the man who doubted that his Holiness had not the power to ordain, decide, and dispose of all as he chose.

"Such is the fanaticism of countries under the Inquisition, where learning is a crime, and where ignorance and superstition are the cardinal virtues. Although my official character would have protected me, I did not choose to dispute or have a ridiculous scene with this *piffre* of a monk. I contented myself with laughing, and making signs to those who were with me to keep silence. So the monk said all he liked at his leisure, and went on a long while without being able to check his passion. Perhaps he perceived by our faces that we were laughing at him, though without words or

gestures. At last he showed us the rest of the chamber, still fuming with rage, and then we descended to the Pantheon."

Saint Simon's visit to the Escurial was disagreeably interrupted by an attack of the small-pox, which laid him up there for more than six weeks. He was, however, carefully nursed and attended by the King of Spain's physician (a "M. Higgins"), and his recovery was complete. He recommends "broth made of beef and partridge, with a little Rota wine," as an excellent diet during convalescence.

On his return to Madrid he found everything in readiness for the marriage of the Prince of the Asturias with the Regent's daughter, who had arrived at the Spanish Court. Cardinal Borgia had been sent from Rome expressly to officiate, and the ceremony was to take place in a private chapel of the palace. Saint Simon happened to be one of the first to arrive on the scene.

"Cardinal Borgia, in his pontifical robes, stood at a corner of the reading-desk, with his face turned towards me, learning his lesson between two chaplains in surplices, who held a large book open before him. The good prelate did not know how to read in it; he made an effort, read in a high voice, and all wrong. His chaplains took him up; he got angry and grumbled at them; began again, and was again corrected, and got more and more angry, until at last he turned round and shook them by their surplices. I laughed to my heart's content, for he saw nothing—he was so occupied and perplexed by his lesson.

"Then the king, the queen, the prince, and the princesses arrived, with all the Court, and their arrival was announced in a loud tone. 'Let them wait!' cried the Cardinal in a fury; 'I am not ready.' In fact, they were obliged to wait while he went on with his lesson, with his face redder than his hat, and all the time in a furious passion."

However, Cardinal Borgia, with the assistance of the chaplains, at last succeeded in getting through the marriage service ; and when the ceremony was over, Saint Simon was made happy even beyond his utmost hopes. Both he and his second son were raised to the rank of Spanish grandes of the first class, and his eldest son (the Vidame de Chartres) was invested with the Golden Fleece at a long and stately ceremonial that delighted his father's heart ; the king himself giving the *accolade* with the sword of the founder and grand-captain of the Order, Don Gonzalo de Cordova. Then followed the usual marriage festivities,—banquets, illuminations, torch-races, and naval combats ; and after a six months' visit, Saint Simon left Madrid highly delighted both with Spain and the Spaniards, and especially pleased at having so nobly “branched” his family.

Soon after his return to Versailles a violent scene took place between Cardinal Dubois and Marshal Villeroy, the young king's governor. The Marshal was clearly the aggressor in this quarrel. On some slight provocation he had stormed and threatened, and made such an uproar, that he was almost dragged out of the room by Cardinal Bissy, who was the only witness of this extraordinary interview. Dubois himself rushed off at once to the Regent's cabinet, and burst into the room, where the prince was talking with Saint Simon, “like a whirlwind, with his eyes starting from his head,” and scarcely able to articulate between rage and fear. He put it plainly to the Regent that he must choose once for all between himself and Villeroy, for, after what had passed, they could not both remain at Versailles. Orleans in this case did not take long to make up his mind. He

had been provoked more than once by the insolent acts of Villeroy, and the very next morning the Marshal was arrested, and after “exhaling his anger,” as Saint Simon calls it, in his own chateau, he was sent into honourable banishment as governor of Lyons.

Thenceforward Dubois had nothing between himself and the highest office in the State, and in little more than a week after the disappearance of Villeroy he was formally named Prime Minister by the Regent. This evil day had long been foreseen and dreaded by Saint Simon. Sooner or later he had felt certain that Dubois would engross the supreme power, and would be to the Regent what the Mayors of the Palace had been to the *rois fainéants* of earlier history; and he had watched Orleans drifting hopelessly and helplessly to this inevitable end. Orleans had himself foreseen it, had dreaded it like Saint Simon, and yet, in his “incurable feebleness,” could not or would not make the slightest effort to save himself. One morning he had been complaining with unusual bitterness of the void he felt in his life, of his indifference to the pleasures of wine and love, and of his weariness of State affairs; and then Saint Simon broke the silence he had maintained for years as to the Regent’s private life, and made the last, the strongest, and perhaps the most eloquent of all his appeals to the friend of his boyhood—urging him to dismiss his *roués* and his mistresses, to give up his notorious suppers at the Palais Royal, to do justice to his natural abilities, and above all, not to enslave himself to a Prime Minister. Orleans listened in silence and embarrassment.

“Then he sat up straight on his chair. ‘Ah, well!’ said he, ‘I will go and plant my cabbages at Villars-Cotterets.’

Then he got up and began to walk about the room, and I with him.

“ Finding himself near the wall, at the corner of his desk where there were two chairs (I still see where they were standing), he drew me by the arm towards one of them, while he set himself down upon the other, and then, turning completely round to face me, asked me sharply if I did not remember to have seen Dubois valet to Saint Laurent, and thinking himself then only too fortunate to be that ; and then he enumerated all the different steps and stages of the Cardinal’s fortunes up to that very moment, and then he exclaimed—

“ ‘ And yet he is not content. He persecutes me to get himself declared Prime Minister ; and I am perfectly certain that, even when he is that, still he will not be content ; and what the devil can he be after that ? ’

“ And then, all at once, he answered his own question, murmuring to himself—‘ *Se faire Dieu le Père*,—if he can.’

“ ‘ Oh, most assuredly,’ said I ; ‘ it is just the very thing we may be quite certain he will do. It is for you, sir, who know him so well, to see if you are well advised to make yourself his footstool for him to step over your head.’

“ ‘ Oh, I will take good care to stop his doing that,’ he answered ; and then he began to walk about the room again afresh.”

The next day this conversation was renewed on the same subject—Saint Simon being vehement and eloquent, as usual, against the very idea of a Prime Minister, and Orleans listening gloomily and patiently as before.

“ A long silence followed my strong protest. The Duke’s head, supported by his hands, had by degrees sunk almost on his desk. He raised it at last, looked at me with a sullen and desponding air, and then lowered his eyes, which seemed to me full of shame, and still remained some time

seated as he was. At last he rose and took several turns about the room, still saying nothing. But what was my astonishment and confusion when he at last broke his silence, stopped short, turned half towards me without raising his eyes, and said all at once in a sad low voice—

“‘We must stop all this. I must declare him Prime Minister almost immediately.’

“‘Sir,’ said I, ‘you are wise and good, and, above all—the master. Have you any commands to give me for Meudon?’

“I abruptly made him a reverence, and was leaving the room, when he called out, ‘But I shall see you again soon, shall I not?’ I made no reply, and closed the door.

“The faithful and patient Belle Ile was still waiting outside, and had stayed in the same place where I had left him, at the entrance, for two mortal hours, without counting the time that he had waited before my arrival.¹ He caught hold of me as soon as he saw me, and earnestly whispered in my ear, ‘Eh, well! how do we stand?’

“‘Nothing can be better,’ I answered, restraining myself as well as I could. ‘I regard the matter as settled, and it is on the point of being declared.’

“‘That is too delightful,’ said he. ‘I must go at once and relieve our friend’s anxiety.’

“I gave him no message, but hastened to get rid of him and be in peace at Meudon, and exhale my indignation at my ease.”

The very next day Saint Simon called on Dubois to compliment him on being Prime Minister, and was warmly thanked for his disinterested friendship, and for having so successfully advocated his claims! “I was not deceived by all this,” says Saint Simon, “for I saw clearly that he only wanted to throw the odium of

¹ Belle Ile was the confidant of Dubois, and was in this case, Saint Simon thinks, acting as his spy. It was fortunate that he could not hear or see through the doors of the cabinet.

his promotion on my shoulders.” Possibly Saint Simon thought that all was fair in war against such an adversary; but his double-dealing and hypocrisy (to use the mildest terms for it) are strangely at variance with the frank outspoken honesty that he so often claims to be the distinctive mark of his character. But it may have been, as M. Chéruel suggests, that he had himself unconsciously deteriorated in the demoralising atmosphere of the Regency.

Cardinal Dubois, however, did not live long to enjoy either his honours or his wealth, computed at £40,000 a-year in our money. In the following year (1723) he underwent a painful operation, and died miserably after it,—refusing to receive the Sacrament, and “gnashing his teeth at his surgeons, in the greatest rage and despair at having to give up his life.”

“What a monster of fortune,” Saint Simon goes on, “and from what a low origin he sprang, and how suddenly and fearfully he was cast down! Truly to him might be applied the words of the Psalmist: ‘I have seen the wicked man exalted like the cedars of Lebanon: I passed by, and lo! he was gone, and his place could nowhere be found.’”

CHAPTER XVI.

SAINT SIMON IN RETIREMENT.

SAINT SIMON took no part in public affairs after that strange interview with the Regent described in the last chapter. He felt that his day, such as it was, had gone by,—that the times were out of joint for him. Many of his old friends were dead ; others were estranged ; he was slighted by the younger generation ; and as for Orleans himself, repugnance, he tells us, began to be mingled with the pity he felt for this poor prince. The disorder that took place at the consecration of the king in 1722 was a sign to him of still worse things that were to follow. Rank and precedence, he says, were utterly disregarded ; the nobility were excluded from their proper dignities ; the complete re-establishment of “the bastards” was evidently near at hand. And thus, seeing nothing but humiliation and annoyance in what was passing round him, Saint Simon goes back to the past, and dwells at some length on the career of his brother-in-law, Lauzun, whose life had been a succession of marvellous adventures. He dwells upon it, he says, for a special reason :—

“Another feeling has prolonged my recital. I am drawing near a term I fear to touch, because my desires cannot be in harmony with the truth: they are ardent, and in consequence bitterly painful, because the other sentiment is terrible, and leaves not the least room for any possible palliation. The terror of arriving at this term has stopped me short, has arrested my hand, has frozen my blood.

“It will be seen at once that I am about to speak of the death, and the *manner* of the death, of the Duke of Orleans; and after such a tender and long attachment between us—for it lasted all his life, and will last all my life—the terrible story of his death has pierced my heart with terror and sorrow for him. It makes me shudder to my very marrow with the horror of the thought that God, in His anger, granted his prayer that he might die suddenly.”

The Regent’s health had been hopelessly shattered by the excesses of thirty years; and one morning Saint Simon (who rarely saw him in these latter days) was horrified to see the change that had come over him. His face was flushed almost purple, his air was dull and heavy, and his utterance was so thick that he could scarcely articulate. It was the beginning of the end. A few days afterwards, while Orleans was talking to one of his mistresses, he suddenly fell backwards in an apoplectic fit, and never recovered either his speech or consciousness. Before Saint Simon could reach Versailles the Regent was dead, and with his death these Memoirs come to an appropriate conclusion.

Saint Simon both feared and distrusted the Duke of Bourbon, who now became Prime Minister; and of Cardinal Fleury—the young king’s tutor—who succeeded Bourbon, he speaks with all his accustomed bitterness. “This prelate,” he tells us, “concealed

under his apparent modesty and gentleness a sublimely ungrateful, vainglorious, and revengeful heart." It was not long before he received a polite hint from Fleury that his presence at Versailles would be dispensed with. "Very little was wanting," he says, "to confirm me in taking the course I had long ago decided on. I went to Paris with the firm resolution of not appearing before the new masters of the kingdom, except on those rare occasions when I should be obliged to pay the indispensable visits of ceremony." For the remainder of his life he divided his time between his town house in the Rue St Dominique and his country chateau. Troubles came thickly upon him in his later years. In 1743 he lost his wife—"that pearl of inestimable price," as he calls her; and a few years afterwards he lost his eldest son, the Duke of Ruffec. His only daughter, who was deformed and repulsively ugly, had made an unhappy marriage: his second son was hopelessly ill of an incurable disease. Meanwhile his own affairs grew more and more involved, and his debts at last amounted to upwards of £60,000.

Beyond these sad facts of his family history, and occasional references in the songs and pasquinades of the day, we know scarcely anything of Saint Simon's private life, except that he read and wrote perpetually,—finding, perhaps, as others have done before and since, greater satisfaction and content among his books and papers than had ever fallen to his lot as a councillor or politician; and finding also a secret and increasing pleasure in recording all that he had seen and suffered, and in making his final appeal to posterity to judge between him and his enemies.

How busily he was occupied in these years of enforced retirement is shown by the voluminous manuscripts he has left behind him; and it is clear that he spared neither time nor labour in his historical researches, consulting both men and books, and (as has been said) annotating Dangeau's Memoirs, in order to verify his facts and dates. Among his countless portfolios of essays and treatises there are two of especial interest. One is the "*Paquet d'Espagne*," on which M. Drumont is now at work; and the other bears the whimsical title of "*Cendres que j'ai vues à plusieurs depuis 1723*," which M. Baschet thinks may possibly turn out to be the promised continuation of his Memoirs up to the death of Cardinal Fleury.

Saint Simon died at the age of eighty in his house at Paris, and was buried—as he had expressly desired—by the side of his wife in the crypt of the parish church of La Ferté Vidame. But in 1794 a party of red Republicans tore the bodies from their coffins, and threw them into a common trench outside the churchyard; and thus, as it were by the irony of fate, the proud Duke, who in his lifetime had regarded even the *bourgeois* as beneath his notice, was destined after his death to share a grave with the vilest of the vile.

END OF SAINT SIMON.

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